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Literature and the Social Left

BY MARY M. COLUM

THE social left, it should be remembered, is not the same as the literary left; a large proportion of the social left belong to the literary right, many of them to the long outmoded literary right. On the other hand, many of the writers of the literary left belong to the social right, even to the outmoded social right such as Royalism. And so when we come to the contents of these two volumes, "Proletarian Literature in the United States"* and "The American Writers' Congress,"† we must not be surprised to find that few of the authors are literary radicals — they are social radicals. Some of them are not writers at all; they are salesmen for a revolution; some of them show distinct marks of creative ability in activities such as government and politics, and they enter the trade of writing because there are so few outlets besides business for creative activity in this country: in the older countries men of such tendencies would be deputies or members of parliament or other aides to government.

Underwood & Underwood
MARY M. COLUM

Outside these two sections, the remaining writers represented in the volumes belong to one of two classes: the bulk of them are trade-writers and a minority are artists; I do not say that they are great artists capable of producing a work more enduring than brass or the gilded monuments of princes, but they are fully capable of producing minor works—some of them might even produce a lasting work, for two or three outstanding talents are represented. A piece of writing can be a work of art and have only a fleeting life; a great work of art, of course, endures. What is a short life for a work of art can be a long life for a piece of trade-writing.

In the modern world writing is both an art and a trade, or an art or a trade. As a trade it came in with the development of capitalism and industrial life, and it is pursued by a number of workers to whom all art, including the art of literature, is an unrevealed mystery. It is likewise followed as a trade by some writers who on occasions can rise to the production of a work of art. Sometimes a man writing what he thinks is a piece of trade-work produced for a market unconsciously achieves a work of art; it doesn't happen often. As trade-writing came in with the development of capitalism, in the non-capitalistic or industrially backward countries the trade-writer, except as newspaper-writer, is an uncommon spectacle. In the highly developed capitalist countries he is fairly common; in a great capitalist country like America he is very much to the fore, and sometimes makes as large an income as any other sort of manufacturer—a coat-and-suit manufacturer or a tooth paste manufacturer. The smaller trade-writer is like the small trader of any kind—the house-painter, the carpenter, the small storekeeper—sometimes he makes a decent living, sometimes a starvation wage.

Are there then capitalist trade-writers and proletarian trade-writers? In the Marxian sense, a capitalist is the owner of the means of social production and the employer of wage labor; the proletarian is the laborer who, having no means of production, sells his labor power in order to live. According to this definition it looks as if all writers who live by their production belong to the proletariat: that is, a wealthy writer like Bernard Shaw and a poor one like Maxwell Bodenheim are both proletarians: as a matter of fact, by conviction both these writers are Marxists. Now let us come to the term "bourgeois" used so frequently by the social left. According to Marx, the bourgeoisie are the capitalist classes, the owners of the means of production: this is the bourgeois in the economic sense. But there is also the bourgeois in the artistic sense, and he has a long ancestry, preceding Marx and Engels and capitalism and industry. He is the person who believes that art should be a handmaiden to some utilitarian pursuit; he is insensitive to purely artistic and intellectual values and thinks that literature especially should be propaganda for morals, for religion, for political opinions, for the ruling classes, for anything else that is his major interest. In the artistic meaning the bulk of the writers with whom these two volumes deal are bourgeois.

The trade-writer rich or poor was not very common when Marx wrote "Das Kapital," and when he and Engels issued the Communist Manifesto, so that they were not in a position to deal with him. However, we can here discuss him from the economic point of view. Trade-writing is labor produced for a known market and exchangeable for cash. The market

* *PROLETARIAN LITERATURE IN THE UNITED STATES: An Anthology. Edited by Granville Hicks and Others. New York: International Publishers.* 1935. $2.50.

† *THE AMERICAN WRITERS' CONGRESS. Edited by Henry Hart. The same.* $1.50. *(This book consists of papers read at the American Writers' Congress in May—see* The Saturday Review, *May 4 and May 11,* 1935.)

Next Week

MUSSOLINI'S ITALY
By HERMAN FINER
Reviewed by G. A. Borgese

STALIN
By HENRI BARBUSSE
Reviewed by Sidney Hook

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fluctuates, but in the main, if a writer produces a piece of work suitable, say, for the market covered by the largely-circulated magazines, we can tell its money-value, varying a little according to the product and the status of its producer. So much for writing as a trade; now we come to writing as an art, writing which is literature. Pure literature has no market value of the kind that can be assessed in money: nobody knows what the cash-value of a masterpiece might be in its author's lifetime. Some people can tell what its value as art is—some critics even know if it will endure. Milton got a few pounds for "Paradise Lost" and enduring fame; Dante got the fame and the privilege of going up and down on another's stairs for the "Divine Comedy"; I think Goethe made no money out of "Faust"; Shakespeare made an income out of his plays; Synge, in our time, made nothing out of his. Some of the greatest living writers would have starved long ago if they had to live by their writing, others of them can live by their work.

The bulk of those represented by "The American Writers' Congress,"—there are, of course, notable exceptions—obviously, from their papers, thought of writing as a trade. In the case of some of them it would clearly take a surgical operation on the brain to enable them to understand writing as an art, writing as literature. This, however, curiously enough, is not true of the one man at the Congress who takes pains to say that "he has neither the ability nor the time to count himself amongst the literary creators." This was Earl Browder, the secretary of the Communist Party, who delivered himself of a paper on Communism and Literature—the paper, though of a quite startling naiveté, was not that of a man insensitive to art as some of the other papers were; it would seem, indeed, that if he had enough knowledge and experience of the subject he would know very well what literature was and could write effectively. Many outstanding figures in politics and sociology are effective writers. Trotsky is very nearly a real writer; Churchill is a very able writer, and even Edouard Herriot can turn out very readable books. It is a noticeable fact, on the other hand, that Lenin, a man of great creative genius in politics, not only had not much ability as a writer, but could only conceive of it as a party weapon; he was filled with a malignant rage against writers because he could never comprehend their function. Stalin, evidently, to some extent, does comprehend—to the extent that might be expected from a man who has spent his life organizing revolution, who has not much knowledge of any art, but has a genuine instinct as to what it is all about.

What literature is would be less puzzling to many men and women of the social left who have not the time nor the opportunity to learn much about it if the proletarian critics and social critics generally would familiarize themselves with a few other literary doctrines in addition to the one that literature is an expression of society. No literary doctrine can explain any one type of literature, though it may give us an enlightening approach to it; not all the literary doctrines taken together can explain the whole of literature. The theory that literature is an expression of society was first put forward by Madame de Staël though its genesis was in previous critics. In his introduction to "Proletarian Literature," Joseph Freeman ascribes the theory, not to de Staël, but to a follower of hers, a minor historian, Prosper de Barante, who lifted this idea amongst others from her. Madame de Staël was an outstanding social and literary critic, but on the literary side she had serious limitation which have to be taken into account in any application of her theories: she understood best the literature that was an expression of society, and thought that all literature was just that. It was clear to Goethe and Schiller, who admired her enormously, that she did not really understand their poetry. Practically all she got out of any poetry was its intellectual content. Her theory of literature works very well when applied to memoirs, diaries, certain kinds of drama and fiction, but applied to other sorts of literature, to the highly imaginative types, it creaks ominously. The one sort of writing it explains in its entirety is what I have called trade-writing which deals with contemporary interests and contemporary ideology.

Among the critical writers in these volumes there are many of a finer sense of literature than Joseph Freeman, and it seems odd that he should be put forward to introduce them. I am at the disadvantage with regard to his Introduction that though I understand it in separate sentences, it baffles me in paragraphs and pages. I gather that, as a whole, he follows Lenin and looks on literature and all writing as a force to be put at the service of communism. In "Voices of October," published about five years ago, he quoted, as if it was a revelation from Parnassus, every nonsensical remark on art and literature that was penned by Lenin, and these were the most nonsensical that were delivered by any great leader since the Caliph Omar delivered himself before burning the library of Alexandria. Both Granville Hicks and Joseph Freeman talk in their papers about certain authors having to insist on their right to use their own material, in their case proletarian material. Both state that Michael Gold found it necessary to assert his right to use the material that is in "Jews Without Money." But who ever questioned his right? The most elementary right of an artist is to choose the material best suited to him, and the real criticism that might be directed against Gold is that he did not use his to the best advantage. On the other hand, Michael Gold acrimoniously questioned Thornton Wilder's right to use the material that appears in "The Cabala" and "The Bridge of San Luis Rey." This assault—it cannot be called criticism—is reproduced in "Proletarian Literature" and reminds one of nothing so much as Nazi prohibitiveness—Thornton Wilder has not the right to be an Anglo-Catholic, to write about Duchesses, or to use terms from Christian ethics or ideology. All critics should insist that intellectual combat be conducted on a worthy plane: there are rules of intellectual combat as well as rules of the ring and these ought to be respected: hit hard by all means, but not below the belt, and bar kicks. I deny the right of anybody to question a writer's liberty to choose any material that suits him, or his liberty to be an Anglo-Catholic, or a Holy Roller, or a Chassidic Jew, or a militant atheist—attacks on race or religion should be barred in literary criticism.

In two of the most interesting papers read at the Congress, one by Malcolm Cowley and the other by Isidor Schneider, we are given a memorable impression of the loneliness, the isolation, of the American writer. This isolation, ascribed

(*Continued on page* 18)

When in Diversity

By JAMES BROUGHTON

WHEN in diversity
patterns make only diffusion,
when even railroad trains
disconnect, never leave,
and canaries, like flowers,
are remote from men's eyes
and the hearts of faces you know,
when without purpose
leaves turn in your book
and the chapters are meaningless,
look to the roots,
look deep to divinity,
seek to the way and the woof
that are one woven unity.

When in diversity
lives of others, and yours,
only meet in confusion,
in crossed figure and line,
when, for your bread,
no yeast can be found or contrived,
for your wine no sap that has strength,
for your mind and your blood no consent,
look to the roots,
look down to the root womb
and the kinship that bred these,
gave wholeness with difference
to brick and magnolia,
pickle and peacock.

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A Violent, Fighting Pioneer

OLD JULES. By Mari Sandoz. Boston: Little, Brown & Company. 1935. $3.

Reviewed by BERNARD DEVOTO

THE Atlantic Monthly prize for non-fiction goes to the biography of a pioneer in the sand-hill country of northwestern Nebraska. A strange, violent, treacherous, and only partly subdued country, it is fittingly symbolized by this Swiss medical student, Jules Sandoz, who shared its violence and treachery, was never subdued, and was part madman and part genius—as perhaps he had to be in order to master the land of his choice. With the scars of terror and adoration plainly visible in her book, the daughter of Jules Sandoz, whom he flogged more to give his own manias an outlet than to secure the utter submission he demanded, and who lost an eye saving his cattle from a blizzard, has written his life without passing over a single wart and has achieved something between a dirge and a Gloria.

I am afraid for this book. The prize award will get it publicity and flattery, but how well will it be understood? It is a magnificent job and Miss Sandoz has come close to making it, as she says she wanted to, the biography not only of her father but of the upper Niobrara country itself. That is just the trouble. It is achingly, glaringly necessary to get the High Plains written about and understood, to force a realization of them and their place in our culture and our problems on the national mind. But Miss Sandoz is a native and a literary artist and, I suspect, disqualified on both counts. For her book has been smoked and weathered in the reality, and the way to call the attention of metropolitan readers to the land they beautify is to import a tabloid reporter and let him slap them in the face. Miss Sandoz, the native, mentions a blizzard that drove fine snow through the walls of a soddy till it popped and sizzled on the stove. The only way to make that carry meaning in the East would be to have Graham McNamee do it on the Ex-Lax hour. Her accents and rhythms, her assumptions, even her vocabulary, are alien. When she speaks of a blowout, the customers will wonder if they had tires in the middle eighties, and if they manage to attach any meaning to niggerwool it will probably be as a brand of tobacco. The movies have informed them that sheep are bad medicine to the nesters, but they don't know why, and as for burning chips, they know there aren't enough in all the clubs on Fifth Avenue to roast one turkey. I say, so far as true books about the West are concerned, the customers want more of the same.

OLD JULES AFTER A HUNT

Well, this is how. It is a high country with an average annual rainfall of between ten and twenty inches, or from a fourth to a half of what you people are used to. The soil is good, when it isn't poisoned, but nobody has ever found out for sure just what it's good for. There are about four destructive hailstorms (stones from the size of a pea to the size of a pretty big apple) between the last and the first frosts, and any of them may mean the end of this year's crop. There is a warm wind in the late winter, very hopeful and deceptive, and a hot wind in the summer that burns up crops like a blowtorch. Yes, and it's still a good plan to plow and trench against fire. In good years the water level rises and the hopeful rush in, get a crop or two, borrow to buy more land and make a killing. Then the drouths come for two or three years and the bankrupt limp out again, leaving a lot of dead, more insane, and still more maimed and crippled. And slowly those who stay, aren't killed, and refuse to be licked, somehow lick the country.

Old Jules Sandoz brought his manias and his violence with him—the country didn't give him either of them but plentifully fertilized both. He was an educated young man and he had an idea: to get more people out here, get the ground broken and the crops coming in, raise up a civilization. He was a doctor, an expert shot, an orchardist, and a paranoiac, and it turned out that he had to be all four in order to survive. A couple of playful jokers dropped him sixty feet down the first well he dug and crippled him for life, but Walter Reed, on duty against the Sioux, saved his foot. He drove one wife crazy, and two more only saved their sanity by running away, but he found a fourth who could endure him. She tried to kill herself only once, she learned to swing at him with anything at hand when he beat her, and finally got so that she could exercise a feeble and intermittent control over him. She bore him six children and brought them all up without a doctor—though Jules weakened when he was past seventy and finally died in a hospital.

A DUGOUT AND HOMESTEADERS

He fought the country and fought nearly everyone in it. He quarrelled, went to law, was sued and jailed, led the vigilantes against his enemies, beat his children constantly and once or twice made a pass at shooting them. He had the energy of all conquerors. He wouldn't be licked. It was a cattleman's country when he came; he made it a farming country. By sheer, dominating fury of will power he held the nesters together, brought in more of them, filled up the gaps made by death and desertion, kept them aligned against the big outfits, and finally won out. He "located" their land for them in spite of gunfire, terrorism, subsidized judges, and the inertia of sheer worthlessness. He never bathed, he changed his shirt only when there was a new schoolteacher, and his children's shoes were made of several plies of denim overalls or of gunny sacking bound round their feet with baling wire. But he was a realist rooted in the earth, a Panurge and a Falstaff in one, and he had a genius with plants that even the government came to recognize. He made the land produce wheat and corn and, what was a Grade A miracle, magnificent berries, vines, and fruits. He was always in debt, but his fences spread wider and wider. And, under the blast of his energy, so did his neighbor's fences. They brought the country in and there it is.

The great virtue of Miss Sandoz's book is that you can see it happening. It is all there: the soddies and the dugouts and the leantos, and the bugs in them; the prairie fires, the blizzards, the cattle that die in the snow and perfume the spring months but fertilize the ground; the rattlesnakes, the great flights of geese, the

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grouse, the wolves, the coyotes, the jackrabbits; the pretty girls, the men who get them in the bushes, the childbirths without doctors that age them, the savage labor that cripples them; the children who are wild as fauns, do a man's work at ten or twelve, but live in paradise; the annual yield in insanity and the murders and suicides that stem from it, all of them handsomely increased after a bad winter or a drouth summer. And a good deal more: the community that will not be denied, a living organism that becomes in the end irresistible; the slow achievement of free men building, in the unlikeliest places, a commonwealth that stands.

There is a good deal of America in "Old Jules." It is, heaven knows, an enthralling story. But it is more than that, and much deeper. It is an experience in citizenship.

Bernard DeVoto, a native of Utah, is the author of "Mark Twain's America," and a specialist in the history of the American frontier.

Life in West Africa

AFRICA DANCES. By Goeffrey Gorer. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1935. $3.50.

Reviewed by JULIAN FEISS

MR. GORER attempts in this book an analysis of the West African Negro, and since he has approached his investigation free from prejudice and with a knowledge of his own limitations, his results are a definite contribution to our knowledge of the psychological background that underlies the actions of many Negro peoples. Some may question his observations on the missionary, but those who have lived in the interior will find the picture that he draws only too true. I fear that his book will not have the wide circulation that it deserves. Mr. Gorer is inclined to paint the truth and the picture will be distasteful to many. It is startling, for instance, to learn that the Negro in his native land lives on a spiritual plane that would compare favorably with that of a religious ascetic. His morals, his ethics, and his social sense seem to decay only on contact with the European. Mr. Gorer's underlying interest is the question of whether or not the European is on trial in Africa. Those familiar with the works of E. D. Morel will find from this later account that the thirty more years of European rule in West Africa which have elapsed since the former were written have not solved the problem of enlightened government.

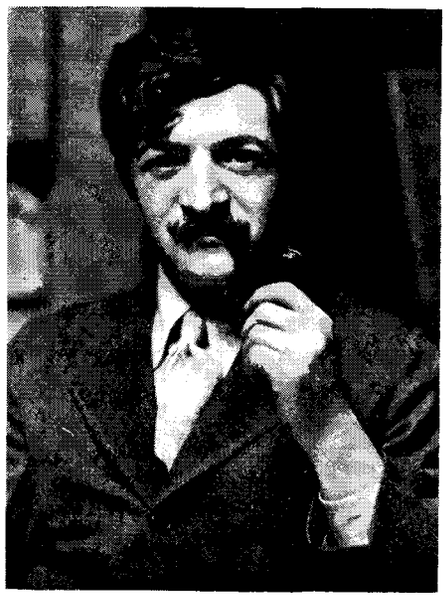
Mr. Gorer's descriptions of religious rites, native dances, and other features of West African life are carefully executed and the picture that he leaves is interesting, instructive and accurate. His numerous photographs are unusual in subject matter, although many of them lack definition and clarity. The book deserves to be highly recommended to the thoughtful reader of travel and strange peoples.

From the East Side

FROM THE KINGDOM OF NECESSITY. By Isidor Schneider. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1935. $2.50.

Reviewed by N. L. ROTHMAN

WHEN a writer sets down the history of his formative years he dedicates himself, consciously or not, to one of two intents. His book will be an ode to nostalgia or a dry-eyed record of his times. It will shed layers of local color and heroic characterization about an endeared past or it will shed light upon it, the light of that understanding the writer has now which he could not have had then. It will be an individualized psychological portrait, of limited significance, or it will be a study of a man against the background of his



ISIDOR SCHNEIDER

society, a novel in the direct line of what Granville Hicks has called the "great tradition" stemming from Howells. It is in the light of these distinctions that we recognize how exceptional and brilliant a book Mr. Schneider has written. For while others, many others, have written of the same scene and period, of the immigrant boy, the East Side in New York, privation, struggle, the long climb to literary success, no one before him has presented this material as it needed to be, in today's idiom, with today's analysis.

Here is the East Side with its wraps off. Mr. Schneider not only remembers the hard, naked ugliness of the tenement jungle life, but he has pondered as well upon the social forces that had of necessity to produce that jungle as their resultant. Both are fused in the telling, and we seem to watch his history unrolling upon two levels, living deep in the woof of things with Isaac Hyman, and watching, thinking, understanding from above with Isidor Schneider. We are conscious of the large events working upon the small lives of the Hyman family. We see, for instance, how an industrial switch from tailored to ready-made clothes throws a whole craft into confusion, beggars a thousand families, mechanizes the lives of thousands of others. We pass through the panic of 1907 and know the terror of hopeless insecurity, soon to be renewed. We watch the war cloud coming up from Sarajevo, far down the horizon, and watch it grow even while none would believe in it, until it shadows America at last. We are herded at bayonet's point with Isaac Hyman, into a draft round-up on the streets of New York, and feel the lonely horror of living in a world dedicated to violence.

Few will need to be reminded that Mr. Schneider did his earliest work in poetry. He has carried over to the novel a demanding exactitude of phrase that endows every page with crystal clarity, and occasional ones with technical brilliance. Such intermittent sketches as those of Favel the Janitor, Filizok the Philosopher, or the gangster Louie the Leaper, are evidence of the poet's virtuosity, held in check only by his preoccupation with a great deal more than virtuosity.

Mysterious Passenger

METEOR. By Karel Capek. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1935. $2.

Reviewed by L. CABOT HEARN

THIS Czech writer, one of whose plays was a sensation, "R. U. R.," and another, "The World We Live In" at least a *succès d'estime,* has now added to his numerous works a queer psychological novel, in which a nursing nun, a clairvoyant, and most of all a poet speculate in their different ways concerning the possible life story of an airplane passenger who crashes in flames. The background of the story is a high wind in Jamaica, a quarantine station, and a plague going on. A surgeon, his amorous confrere, and a specialist are working over the cases. The airplane passenger is brought in terribly demolished. He is faceless and utterly unrecognizable, and there are no data at all. The nursing nun, however, soon relates to the surgeon a lengthy dream she had about him; the clairvoyant in a remarkably described effort to get inside the very soul of the dying man, gives his version. Finally the poet writes out far the longest, most complete, and most vivid version.

This is an interesting experiment of Capek's, and sometimes brillantly effective, but not at all times. The most interesting part psychologically concerns the struggles of the clairvoyant to solve the mystery. The poet's story bears a certain similarity to a Conradian tale, not any particular one, but a general resemblance. The locale is Cuba and Haiti.

This novel is compelling in spite of its queerness, and the translation excellent.

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Only Yesterday in Finance

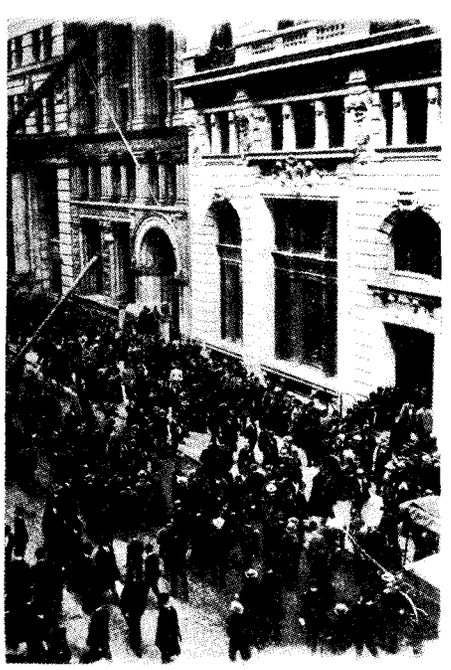
THE LORDS OF CREATION. By Frederick Lewis Allen. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1935. $3.

Reviewed by THOMAS F. WOODLOCK

This book is an attempt to tell the story of the immense financial and corporate expansion which took place in the United States between the depression of the eighteen-nineties and the crisis of the nineteen-thirties; to show how profoundly it altered the circumstances and quality of American life, why and how it ended in collapse and what the collapse meant to all of us.

THUS, in the first sentence of his preface, Mr. Allen describes the task he set himself. It happens that this reviewer's experience, as financial newspaper man, stockbroker, and corporation official, covers—save for some five years spent in government service—the entire period (and more) dealt with by Mr. Allen. (Those five years, however, 1925-1930, included the final stages of the great speculative orgy!) In the light of that experience he must pronounce Mr. Allen's survey a solid piece of work, notably accurate as to facts, remarkably complete in scope, and well-balanced in narrative-construction. Those who enjoyed "Only Yesterday" will not need to be told that it is interestingly written.

By comparison with many of the voices at the present-day "wake" over the corpse of "Business Leadership" Mr. Allen's contribution strikes one as a medical student's laboratory dissection, contrasted with the stripping of a zebra's bones by a collection of shrieking South African *aasvogels.* As a dissection it is a meritorious piece of work so far as it goes. It lays bare many malformations, lesions, fractures, morbid growths, and deficiencies in bones, muscles, and nerves. That it does not quite satisfy the reader who seeks a complete diagnosis of the "times"—a complete account of the pathology evidenced by the subject—is not Mr. Allen's fault. No such diagnosis, humanly speaking, is possible today. Living as we do in a period of rapid and revolutionary change and, as a consequence, in a state of emotional thinking, it is practically impossible for any of us to see the picture of our time in its ultimate perspective and true proportions, particularly when as in the present case the thing that we are studying,—wealth and economic power—is the thing against which the change itself is mainly directed.



SCENE IN THE PANIC OF 1907
Pictures on this page from "The Lords of Creation."

Mr. Allen has made an honest, indeed a gallant attempt to be "impartial" and to hold the scales fairly as between the parties. For instance, speaking of the ethical standards of finance he says:

> It is probable that the general average of character and scruple was as high in the financial world as elsewhere in American business during the period which we are discussing; that man for man the financiers had at least as keen a sense of honor as one would be likely to find among the business men of the average small city. The only question is whether their principles were commensurate with their great opportunities and powers.

He has also a keen eye for fact as distinguished from myth, as witness this shrewd observation bearing upon the popular theory of the financial octopus:

> Indeed, one of the strange things about the capitalist system in America was that although it had undergone a revolutionary change as more and more devices were discovered and widely utilized by which men at the top could acquire power and wealth, it was not really a system at all; not an order but a disorder of irresponsible forces.

The attentive reader will catch other hints here and there, running counter to popular ideas and superstitions.

But while no partisan, apparently, of any particular economic or social faith or heresy Mr. Allen, like the rest of us is breathing the atmosphere of a notably troubled time, in which it is more than ordinarily difficult so to immunize oneself against the miasma of passion and prejudice as to see with any approach to sureness our own time *sub specie historiæ*—not to say *æternitatis.* That in this he has not been wholly successful, that in the turn of a phrase, in an emphasis here and there, his own (quite natural) sympathies peep out momentarily cannot count for much against his achievement—for who amongst us really believes he could do much better?

Careful scrutiny will detect emphasis wrongly placed, in Harriman's Alton pur-

Brown Bros.
BUY LIBERTY BONDS!
A war-time rally fills Wall Street

chase for example. It was not primarily a lust for profit that dictated that transaction. What happened was that owing to President Blackstone's age and impaired health control of the road was in the market. John W. Gates and A. E. Stillwell were both dickering for it, neither of whom was regarded by Mr. Harriman as a desirable person in the railroad business, and he simply stepped in and forestalled them, as a matter of "policy" in "protection of the railroad situation." The recapitalization of the road was an afterthought—indefensible, of course, but not the prime objective. As Mr. Allen at that time was busy with elementary school books he cannot be criticized very harshly for not having an intimate knowledge of all the backgrounds in this and other transactions. But as a matter of fact direct "profit" entered less at times into the calculations of men like Hill and Harriman than our present generation is disposed to allow—and the lust of the "game" had more to do with their actions. How else account for the behavior of the group who "stood without hitching" by Jim Hill in the Northern Pacific affair when "profit" beckoned frantically from the stock market? But these blemishes, such as they are, are doubtless inevitable in a survey such as Mr. Allen has given us.

The book will satisfy neither side of the controversy. Each will find in it something to support its case. Perhaps that may be accounted its chief merit. In these days to have written it is an authentic achievement upon which Mr. Allen is entitled to congratulation at least from all those who believe that there *is* something to be said for both sides.

Thomas F. Woodlock is contributing editor of The Wall Street Journal.

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The Saturday Review
of Literature

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The Vials of Wrath

THERE is an impression abroad that the old charge against Americans, that they cannot take or make satire, has lost its force. First "Babbitt" and then "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes" and afterward "Of Thee I Sing," are supposed to have proved the contrary. Apparently all that has happened is that some Americans have learned to appreciate the satiric spirit. They are the Americans who read Anatole France and were invigorated by his salty nihilism. They are the Americans who read the "Spoon River Anthology," support the best columnists, and leave the more sentimental movies after the first reel.

But many millions of Americans can have developed no satiric sense whatsoever, otherwise they would not read the tabloids which publish headlines of 20,000 slain in the Ethiop wars daily, with reference in the text only to a corporal's squad of casualties. And the satiric sense of even more millions must be embryonic, to judge from the comic strips. For at least half of these are certainly satiric in intention, and yet it is clear that they appeal because of the burlesqued familiarity of the types presented. The satire, unless it is heavily stressed, does not reach beyond the agreeable sensation we all feel when something not too unpleasant happens to our friends.

And indeed one wonders whether the realistic novel, so popular now among the moderately sophisticated, is satire or plain naturalism. Mr. O'Hara, for example—are his deadly portraits of commonplace people whose vitals have been eaten out by gin and cheap ambition, satiric or photographic? They are photographic, so the inhabitants of his home town say. They are also satiric in the highest degree if you read satire into them, which means if you supply comparisons which make their type seem dreadful examples of a trivial world. But it seems probable that, as with the comic strips, most readers do not see them that way at all. What they enjoy is the familiarity, combined with a sense that while they know such people they are superior themselves, yet not so superior as not to be able to drink or make love with them whenever they wish. The result of reading such novels for these readers is not the satiric sense but rather a satisfaction of curiosity.

The deadliest satire in recent writing is to be found in the paragraphs at the chapter heads of Sinclair Lewis's "It Can't Happen Here," supposed to be quoted from a book by Buzz Windrip, the big-promise president who becomes the bad-egg dictator of America. Yet it has been justly remarked that a considerable percentage of Mr. Lewis's following may read these chapters with no suspicion of their satire. They are so specious, ingratiating, familiar, that while the absurdity of their statements is immense it is quite as easy to swallow them as the exaggerations of popular science. But perhaps Lewis meant them so to be read by those not satirically minded, in which case he has achieved an irony which he must very much enjoy.

There are two indispensable qualifications for real satire and these very few writers today possess in equal measure, and especially our American writers. One is perspective. The satirist must have a range of values. He must know by intimate experience what society can be like or what it has been like, before he describes it as it is. Otherwise we get pictures of wild youth or sodden poverty or foolish plutocracy which merely arouse our curiosity, although that may be intense. The writer feels that something is wrong, but has no standards by which to judge his characters, hence must let you do the judging. This was not the method of Swift, or of Mark Twain either, who seldom dealt in direct comparisons, yet never failed to make the reader feel that there could be and were values that made the society described ridiculous or intolerable. Read the voyage to the land of the Houyhnhnms for its able stressing of the vices of eighteenth century Englishmen.

The other qualification is indignation—a moral indignation, if "moral" be used in the sense of a passion for good conduct. Since Twain, American satire has been often lacking in wrath, although Lewis's book is a notable exception. Irony can be merely amused, but not satire. The satirist must be good and mad. He must be angry without losing his sense of humor. He must be furious without losing control over his brains. What has happened to the quality of indignation in the American temper? Few seem to give vent to their temper in print today, except the communists and they seem to be more vituperative than really angry. They are too sure of themselves for anger even when they rage. The satirist's anger is always moral. He is not calmed by theories nor satisfied by agreement. He may write calmly, but his utter condemnation is felt underneath.

The truth may be that we like this society of ourselves better than it deserves. Having, beyond all other ages, decided to live in the present, with religion become shadowy and ethics a matter of experiment, the worst happenings, the most deplorable customs, the flimsiest characters, arouse our curiosity rather than our anger. Our younger novelists can be sarcastic and abusive, but it takes more moral clarity than they have attained to write the satire that the country needs.

The Anisfield Award

The Saturday Review of Literature announces the award of the John Anisfield prize of $1000 to Harold F. Gosnell, Associate Professor of Political Sciences in the University of Chicago, for his book "Negro Politicians: The Rise of Negro Politics in Chicago," published by the University of Chicago Press. The John Anisfield Award, established in 1934 by Mrs. Edith Anisfield Wolf of Cleveland, Ohio, in memory of her father, John Anisfield, is awarded annually to encourage and reward the production of good books in the field of racial relationships, either here or abroad. The committee of judges consists of Henry Pratt Fairchild, Donald Young, and Henry Seidel Canby.

Professor Gosnell's study of "Negro Politicians" is a straightforward, thorough, and understanding account of the political behavior of the Negro in Chicago. While the data presented are almost entirely new, and the facts are generally allowed to speak for themselves without being distorted by inference and interpretation, they are none the less well integrated with the fields of both government and interracial relations as a whole.

Ten Years Ago

"Christina Alberta's Father" by H. G. Wells was reviewed by H. W. Boynton in a late October issue of The Saturday Review in 1925. Mr. Boynton wrote that the novel presented *"an interesting paradox of the man and author."* . . . and that while priding himself *"on being a scientist, not artist,"* H. G. Wells remained *"a wistful seeker of romantic happiness."* The reviewer's verdict was: *"a characteristic Wellsian comedy of ideas."*

Today

On page 13 of this issue, Gilbert Seldes reviews "Things to Come" by H. G. Wells, a scenario in book form. Mr. Seldes writes that the motion picture made from it *"cannot help being a thousand times more intelligent than all but half a dozen pictures made a year."* He concludes that it is Mr. Wells's *"sense of human character"* and *"positive relish for its oddities which make him ideal screen material."*

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Letters to the Editor: *Poets and Railroad Crossings; Who Invented the Steamboat?*

Robinson and Frost

SIR:—My newly acquired and still somewhat tender New England conscience will not let pass unchallenged the statement of Mr. Ledoux in the Oct. 19th *S. R. L.* to the effect that Robinson had taken his motto, STOP, LOOK, LISTEN, from some railroad crossing of the Boston and Maine. We New Englanders are a proud race. As in all things we preserve our God-given independence even in the matter of grade crossing insignia. Let all the other railroads play the mimic, our grade crossing legend stoutly reads: LOOK OUT FOR THE ENGINE.

In short, Mr. Ledoux is guilty of some confusion. It was Robert Frost, deriving from California, who brought with him the more ordinary admonishment to STOP, LOOK AND LISTEN. It is Frost who stops to embrace a boundless moment, Frost who sees the strayed colt, Frost whose ears are exclusively attuned to the unmistakable accents of the New England farmer.

Robinson would have little or none of these. He was looking out for the engine. External or adventitious peculiarities interested him not at all. His was the search for motivation, for the hidden springs to human action. The train and its passengers were for him only surface phenomena. His study was the engine which hauled its human load over a roadbed considerably more hazardous and toward a terminal even more uncertain than any on the dear old B. and M.

V. FOSTER HOPPER.

New York University.

Personal: Books Wanted

SIR:—In *The Literary Digest* I saw an article on another article in your magazine to the effect that you print "ads" of the unusual needs of humanity.

I want to put in an ad to the effect that we are a group of intellectuals, radicals, and literary hounds marooned in the wildest mountains in the U. S., where our men folks are miners. We need magazines and books and Victrola records to help us pull through six months of snow when we can't get out to *anywhere*. We must have literature, and most of what we make now goes for mine supplies. We are women, children and men. Come to our aid!

ELIZABETH YOUNG GEORGE.

Cecilville, Siskiyou Co.,
California.

The editors are glad to print this request in the correspondence column, and hope it will meet with response.

Poor James Rumsey

SIR:—In your issue of October 5th, I find a review of the late Thomas Boyd's recent book, "Poor John Fitch."

May I ask space for a few words, since your reviewer brands Fitch's contemporary inventor, Rumsey ("Poor James Rumsey" will fit him also) as "unblushingly mendacious" in his claims to priority of invention?

Anyone who examines the models of the boats made by Rumsey and Fitch, which are in the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, can see that they are entirely different in construction. The close margin of time between the two inventors' accomplishments and the fact that Fitch had the advantage of carrying on his projects near a great city, while Rumsey was working in an obscure village in the Virginia mountains, and that Fitch is now generally conceded to have made his first successful demonstration from one to four months before Rumsey's final demonstration in this country, has caused confusion.

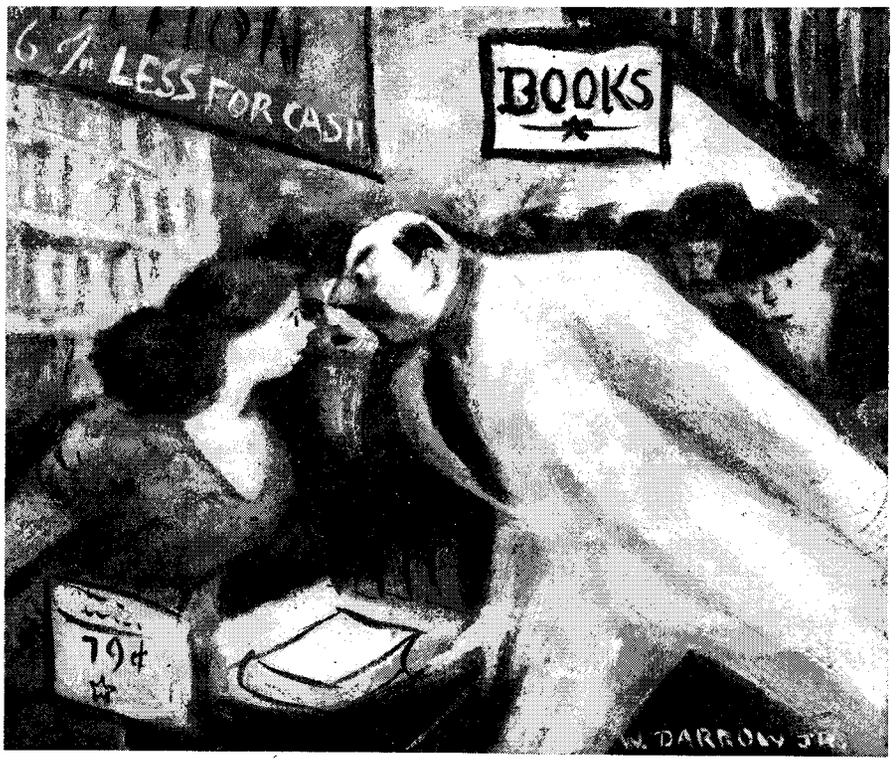
Your reviewer might look over "James Rumsey, Pioneer In Steam Navigation," by Ella May Turner, head of the department of English, Shepherd State Teachers' College, Shepherdstown, West Virginia, Mennonite Publishing House, Scottdale, Pa., 1930. It was reviewed favorably in your pages. In it, I think, Miss Turner effectually shows that Fitch did not propel a boat by steam until the summer of 1787, and that James Rumsey invented and propelled a boat by steam against the current of the Potomac River in the Fall of 1784, in April 1786, in September 1787, and finally made a big public demonstration in December 1787.

Rumsey left for England shortly after his demonstration and fell dead of apoplexy as he was addressing a scientific gathering in London in 1792. Poor Fitch, as your reviewer states, committed suicide in 1798. His multitude of words, sometimes contradictory, and his behavior would indicate a definitely psychopathic personality. But he was certainly a genius who made a boat move by steam and is entitled to the credit as one of the pioneers in steam navigation. Rumsey, on the other hand, seems to have been a much more normal person, of the dogged, persistent, patient type, and like the tortoise was in a fair way to have got ahead of any number of nimble hares when death took him out of the race. Fulton knew them both and he also knew the plans of the many other pioneers who had dreamed and invented more or less impractical steamboats.

But as Mr. William Allen White says of Mr. Boyd's book: "Fame has made her award—Alas, who cares."

HELEN B. PENDLETON.

Shepherdstown, W. Va.



"KNOCK BALZAC DOWN TO 69 CENTS. STERN'S IS HAVING A RUN ON SEX PSYCHOLOGY."

Miracle in Philadelphia

SIR:—Hurrying home to hotel in a driving rain, cold, dark night, I was stopped this Sunday night (Sunday night in Phila!) by a lighted window—stopped—eyes surely fail me (Sunday night in Phila!). Do I see on tables and chairs in this store window an open Plantin Bible, a Nuremberg ditto, a lovely 14th century MS. Bible, the very copy of Holy Writ given by Dr. Johnson to Mrs. Thrale, a 1571 Anglo-Saxon New Testament, a copy of the 1661 Eliot Indian Bible, the wondrous pages of the Doves Press Bible before me—all in a lighted store window in Phila on a wet, cold, dark Sunday night? Miracle!

Can you guess whose window it was?

J. EDGAR PARK.

Editor's Note: Our guess is Dr. A. S. W. Rosenbach's.

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The Man of Promise

BY RANDOLPH BARTLETT

TWO decades have passed since Willard Huntington Wright's "Modern Painting" created a sensation in the art circles of two continents. The earnest seekers who were trying to break away from the domination of the academies hailed the author as their prophet because he had rationalized their principles of form and color.

The following year the same young men extended his field, and in "The Creative Will" sought to expound, or at least introduce, a system of esthetics applicable to all the arts. Soon he published a novel, "The Man of Promise," in which he endeavored to prove in practice the soundness of his precepts. He had already spent two years (1912-14) as editor of *The Smart Set*. Between times he sponsored art exhibitions, wrote extensively for the more serious magazines, and established himself as the leader of the New York intelligentsia. He was less than thirty years old and it seemed that the world was his oyster.

Almost on the twentieth anniversary of the appearance of "Modern Painting" Mr. Wright's *alter ego*, S. S. Van Dine, presents the latest and one of the weakest of his nine popular detective stories, "The Garden Murder Case." The ending of one brilliant career, the barren, intervening years, and the achievement of spectacular success in an entirely new direction, combine to make Mr. Wright one of the most interesting enigmas of the American literary scene.

In the period when Wright was Wright, he tried to do more than was humanly possible. He had been a football player on one of the roughest teams in the Southwest, but no physique was equal to the strain he placed upon it in the "Creative Will" period. Suddenly he disappeared from New York, and it was nine years before he again engaged in sustained work.

In these barren years Wright knew illness and poverty, but he never relinquished his dream of continuing his writing on esthetic subjects. He subsisted on hack work for California newspapers and movie magazines, and even flirted with the movies themselves, but to the few friends who encountered him from time to time he always spoke of the plans he was cherishing for better days. The one reminder of past triumphs was a slender volume, hardly more than a pamphlet, "The Future of Painting," which appeared in 1923*.

Then came the Van Dine period, and while the story of the gestation of Philo Vance novels has been widely publicized, more or less accurately, there is one scene that has never been described.

Wright was living in the Belleclaire Hotel on upper Broadway. Not more than three or four persons ever saw him there. His room was lined with letter files which he was using as receptacles for carefully tabulated notes. He was ill. One day in the fall of 1925, a friend called, and during the conversation Wright said:

"I've worked out the formula of the detective story, because Doctor Jake won't let me do any serious reading or writing and I had to do something. As soon as I am well, I'm going to write six of these novels, and that will give me all the money I'll need for the rest of my life. Then I'm going to get a country place somewhere, perhaps in England, up the Thames, and finish *those* things," and he waved his hand proudly at the impressive array of filing cases.

S. S. VAN DINE

Just what specific subjects were covered in that accumulation of notes, I do not feel at liberty to state. One of the enterprises was so ambitious and yet so practical that it was surprising it never had been attempted. It would have been a work of high scholarship, and libraries are much poorer because it has never been done. It was to gain the leisure to carry out these designs that he proposed to write six successful detective stories.

Less than a year from the day he made this announcement, "The Benson Murder Case" was published. Wright used the pseudonym of Van Dine and swore his friends to secrecy, but when the tremendous success of the series was assured, he lost all desire for concealment of his authorship. The first six novels certainly should have enabled him to carry out his idea of retiring, to work on his former program, but now there are nine. A tenth, "The Purple Murder Case," is announced in preparation, and he is still only 47 years old. The unfortunate thing about it all is that since the "Greene," their deterioration has been constant, until now all there is to the novels is the formula.

The ninth milestone in this departure from early principles, the ninth stitch in the literary shroud, the ninth of the six-letter "Cases" concocted to display the excellence of a reference library, is perhaps not quite so bad as its predecessor, the "Casino," for it contains no such "True Confessions" writing as this gem from the penultimate opus:

"That last terrible scene will haunt me to my dying day and send cold shivers racing up and down my spine whenever I let my mind dwell upon its terrifying details."

This, and the substitution of a circus performer's life-line for a bullet-proof vest are the main points of difference between these last two concertos for Philo. The significant fact lies in the cumulative evidence that Mr. Wright is becoming so bored with Mr. Van Dine that he probably cannot tolerate him much longer. Wright was never slipshod in his work and Van Dine is. Wright was as elegant as his own Philo, and Van Dine needs a mental shave and a haircut. He might profit by reading from Mr. Wright's earlier works a passage from "The Creative Will:"

"Fantastic and eccentric surfaces are often the disguises of spurious and worthless works. The greatness of true art, like aristocracy in the individual, is easily recognized beneath the most commonplace integuments."

Unless he has remained overlong in this mummy case of his own making, Wright may yet resurrect himself. He adopted the pseudonym of Van Dine to conceal himself from the world. Today it appears that all the device has accomplished has been to conceal him from himself. Mr. Wright's attention might be called to this remark of his own hero, Stanford West, in "The Man of Promise":

"I'd rather die in want and exile and know I had done something new and worth while, than to receive all the benefits and emoluments of the world for something I didn't believe in."

Perhaps he has come actually to believe in Philo and *Régie* cigarettes, but all who remember Wright's own novel will perhaps see a parallel between the frustration of Stanford West and that of his creator. At least there would seem to be material here for another book, "The Wright Murder Case, or What Happened to the Creative Will?"

Randolph Bartlett, now on the staff of the New York Sun, *was a newspaperman on the West Coast when Wright was there. He wrote for the old* Smart Set, *and was one of the first to see the manuscript of "The Benson Murder Case."*

* "Who's Who" lists a work called "Modern Literature" as published by Wright in 1926. I have never seen this except in manuscript. It is not in the New York Public Library, or the Library of Congress Catalogue, and it does not appear in the book trade lists of that year. Can Philo solve this mystery?

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Mr. Wells to the Screen

THINGS TO COME. By H. G. Wells. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1935. $1.50.

Reviewed by GILBERT SELDES

IF I say that Mr. Wells comes to the screen thirty years too late, I do not mean it altogether as a reproach. "Things to Come," specifically, could not have been written thirty years ago, nor have been produced if it had been written. For effectiveness, the man and the moment coincide beautifully. But the moving picture is now some forty years old and the time when men with the gifts of H. G. Wells should have invaded the field and captured the vast resources of the screen was somewhere between 1890 and 1910; they could have accelerated those significant improvements in the movies for which they all clamored, to which they contributed nothing, content with sneering at a despised and vulgar entertainment. Mr. Wells had other important things to do, but it is a pity he did not come to the screen before.

Mr. Wells has used the material of his earlier book, "The Shape of Things to Come," as the basis for this story. The action comes down to the year 2050. I should say at once that the published scenario does not in any way resemble such a printed script as "Barnum," which was difficult to read and not worth reading. Mr. Wells has neatly used his own old art of fiction, the dialogue of the stage or screen, and very effective bits of cinema technique to create a simple and effective presentation; in the mind's eye you can see what happens; in the mind, you have no difficulty following the story. So far as that goes, publication of the film is justified. It is good, substantial Wells and at times you get the impression that the author has reveled in the thought of the camera and the screen, as if these things would give substance to his visions. And they will.

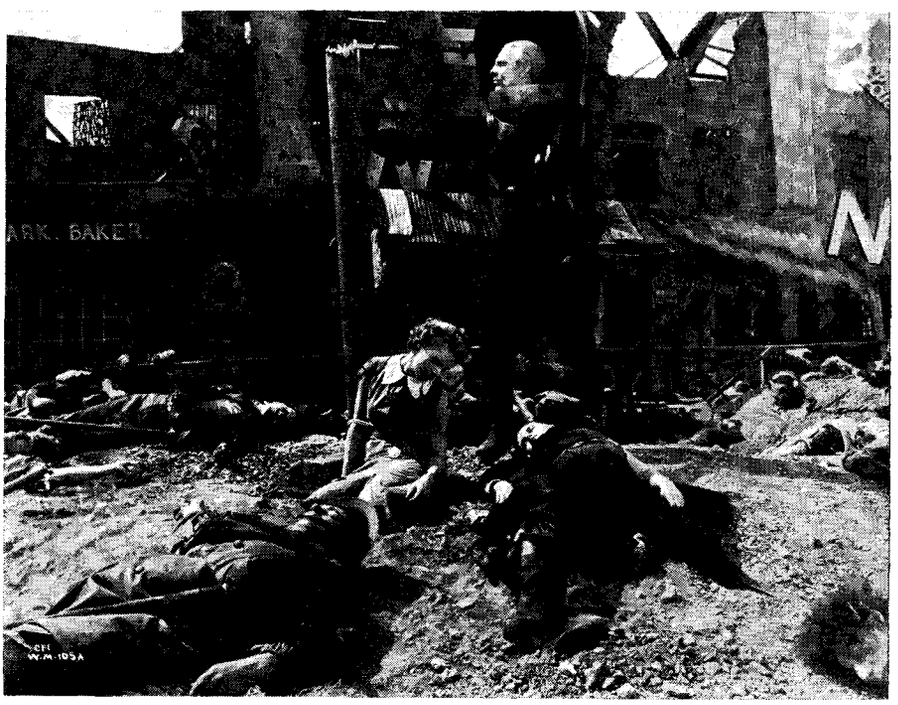
As for the ideas, they are necessarily familiar and the film treatment emphasizes both their virtues and their defects. You begin with the breakup of the decent life of Everytown by an unheralded attack from the air; there is Mr. Wells's fear that another world war is coming, but it comes as an act of madness, without causes, only consequences. Quite in the ordinary way of the intelligent Hollywood director, Mr. Wells provides a scene of little children playing and one of them wrecking the toy railroad of another by popping at it with a small cannon; that is the symbol of the coming war and the Marxians won't like it. I do not like it myself because I think Mr. Wells omits the first fundamental of his argument. (The entire picture is, of course, an argument.) He must know that the movie audience is affected by one thing and one thing only: what it sees on the screen. And he has not provided any visual explanation of the coming of war. His audience will be convinced that if a causeless war came, the world might be destroyed, and equally convinced that such a war cannot come to *them*.

In the course of this section, Mr. Wells's imagination picks tremendously moving visual images to show its destructiveness, its insanity. Then follows the portion of the picture which is superb: the breakdown of civilization. The war has been going on for years and the great market place of Everytown is a vast shell hole. In the twentieth year of warfare the enemy is spreading disease from its planes; chemists and doctors searching for a cure now lack the meanest accessories, the simplest medicines, iodine, running water. The sickness spreads and it gives Mr. Wells his best symbol and his finest cinematic triumph. It is the wandering sickness; the afflicted rise and wander, without motive, without consciousness; they merely go, wander, walk about, until they fall dead. Other forms of ghastliness could be found; but for the moving picture the symbol has to move. Mr. Wells's rightness here should bring him a vivid emotional response from his audiences.

After this desolation there is the central action in which Mr. Wells combines several old and always good situations. Everytown is dominated by a boss who has, apparently, rallied the population in the worst days of the pestilence and by rude vigor made himself chief. Suddenly appearing over this sour and desperate country comes Mr. Wells's future, in the shape of one John Cabal, representing the small group of survivors who have gathered to combine all there is of scientific knowledge with all there is of political wisdom in the world. A merciful Peace Gas sends all in Everytown to sleep, the new masters of the world take over, and although we have passed through only nine of the sixteen divisions, I am afraid the picture is ended. I hope Mr. Alexander Korda, the producer, and Mr. Wells will prove me wrong.

For now we pass into one of the familiar Utopias and Mr. Wells, keenly aware of the static quality of Utopia and as keenly aware of the moving quality of the screen, has done his best to give us a new interest, a new conflict. His ideas require this, and so does the moving picture; but I cannot feel that it succeeds. The world of the future is serene, absorbing, but men must live dangerously, and for Man there must be no rest and no ending; he must go on—conquest beyond conquest "and when he has conquered all the deeps of space and all the mysteries of time—still he will be beginning."

For the picture, Mr. Wells makes concrete suggestions. A space gun has been invented and mice have been sent in a shell around the moon; now a young man and a young woman volunteer to go. A rabble rises against the masters; they cry for an end to adventuring, to driving hard; they want an easy contentment. Here again the old movie technique: a race for the space gun. The masters win; the young people are shot off into space just as the insurrection sweeps over the base of the gun; and with them in interstellar space and Cabal asking, "All the universe—or nothingness . . . Which shall



"AFTER THIS DESOLATION . . ." *A scene from the Wells-Korda film, to be released here through United Artists, under the title "100 Years from Now."*

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it be?" the curtains close on the screen. Those young people willingly risking their lives to fly to the moon are the part of us that experiments and risks and is eternally unsatisfied and pushes further the frontiers of the world. My mind, my familiarity with Mr. Wells's work, tells me so; my picture of his moving picture tells me nothing of the sort. The sense of universal significance is lacking.

I express my fears about the second part of "Things to Come" because I want very much for it to be a great success. It cannot help being a thousand times more intelligent than all but half a dozen pictures made a year. The dexterity and aptitude of Mr. Wells have carried him over more thorny places; his sense of the multifarious activities of human beings is precisely what the screen needs and can best express; like Dickens from whom the cutback was brought to the screen, Mr. Wells has a sense of human character and a positive relish for its oddities which make him ideal screen material. (Where is "Mr. Polly?" Where, moreover, is "Tono Bungay," a supremely fine moving picture story?) You can feel Mr. Wells's feelings about the movies again and again; when he uses a wipe it is not because he doesn't know how to get one scene off and another on; it is because he wants one impression wiped away. In his early sections he uses speech sparingly; when the bombing begins and the smoke finally clears "something small and dark is seen far down the footpath . . . We pass up the road and . . . we see little Horrie in his panoply (of a boy's soldier suit) sprawling dead . . . A long silent pause."

It is not because I retain any sentimental devotion to the silent movies that I think this pause so excellent. The use of silence has at last begun in the pictures and Mr. Wells has felt its value. His fadeouts are as good as his mob scenes. You feel him a man born to the screen and hope that he will make up, with his tremendous energy, for the years he has kept away.

Gilbert Seldes, author of "The Seven Lively Arts," is one of the liveliest critics of the motion pictures.

Saving America

THE LAND OF THE FREE. By Herbert Agar. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1935. $3.50.

Reviewed by FRANK ERNEST HILL

A VOLUME which seeks to diagnose the sickness of present-day America and suggest a way to health lays as heavy a handicap upon itself as any author can invent. It may not even arouse attention. If it does, it is more likely to win curses than plaudits. To establish a challenging idea is probably all one man can hope to accomplish.

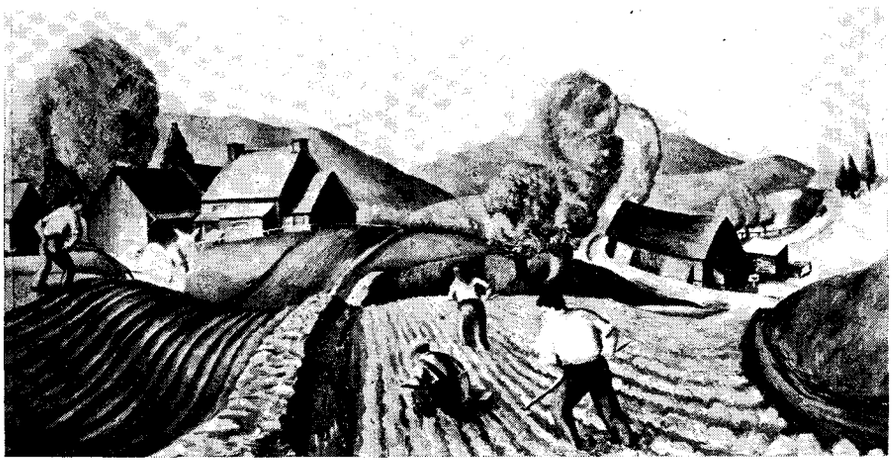
"The Land of the Free" attempts to save America, and it goes far toward establishing a challenging idea. Mr. Agar carries his chronicle back to American culture as it existed in 1790. This culture, in his opinion, rested on newly won political privileges linked with economic opportunity. Men like Washington, Jefferson, and Madison believed in private property. But private property meant to them the ownership of the means of production—shops or small factories or farms. It was the proper test, as they saw matters, of the right to vote. But Alexander Hamilton had little sympathy with the diffusion of ownership which then existed; and which Madison and Jefferson, and John Adams, in a more moderate and perhaps more practical way, wished to preserve. Hamilton proposed to concentrate wealth, and Mr. Agar paints him as ruthlessly indifferent as to what happened to the people—that "great beast"—in the process. Jefferson won power, but not until Hamilton had succeeded in sowing the seeds of industrialism. Jefferson might have uprooted them, but he did not. They flourished and produced with the aid of the Civil War the complete triumph for concentration of wealth which confronts us today. It is the worse, says Mr. Agar, because through the noisy emptiness of Jacksonian democracy on to Lincoln, Roosevelt, and Wilson, we have preserved a lip service to Jefferson's ideal. Benefits were possible under complete Hamiltonianism or complete Jeffersonianism. "But combine Hamilton's economics with Jefferson's politics and you get none of these benefits. You do not have a nation of free men; you do not have an efficiently governed nation; you do not have anything that any statesman or philosopher ever recommended to mankind. What you have are the worst features of American life from President Grant to President Hoover."

While this was happening American culture, based upon personal independence born of economic freedom, developed in the areas where economic freedom remained, but was curtailed as these areas grew smaller. Economic freedom was surrendered because of the promise of abundance which the concentration of wealth held out. But, Mr. Agar shows, this abundance, although paid for, was never delivered. Today the Americans seem to face two alternative drifts —one toward fascism and the other toward communism. Under fascism Mr. Agar sees us remaining poor if better disciplined, half-starved slaves with no opportunity to develop our natural culture. Under communism that culture will also be impossible; we shall still be slaves, if perhaps better fed.

But Mr. Agar sees a way out. It lies, he asserts, in an adaptation to modern conditions of the original American culture based on relatively small property holdings in the hands of the many. We must encourage true private property again, and discourage private enterprise, which, in contrast to it, has brought us to our present state. We must be ready for sacrifices. Our culture must mean a great deal to us. We must abolish finance-capitalism and pay our way as we go.

In the role of prescriber Mr. Agar is less convincing to me than he is in that of diagnostician. I suspect that his program runs counter to established economic trends. Nor am I convinced that the professional economists, each following a theory through to its natural conclusion, or Mr. Agar, following his theory through, take sufficient account of what the infinite variations of modern life may do to modify our present economic structure in unsuspected ways. But I am sympathetic to the idea of a program which will work with American conditions, preserving the traditional American spirit which Mr. Agar admires, in a new and creative role. I believe with Mr. Agar also that we have paid too little attention to that spirit and too much attention to money rewards and technical devices. Those who read "The Land of the Free" will find the implications of the present moment set forth with a new and haunting force. If Mr. Agar's program is not a sound one, what is? The question needs much asking. Perhaps the strength of his book is, that having started out to answer this, it has established the urgency of the question itself.

Mr. Hill's recent book, "What Is American?", is a study of American civilization.



A PWA ARTIST INTERPRETS THE AMERICAN SCENE
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The Backwash of War

CAPTAIN CONAN. By Roger Vercel. Translated from the French by Warre Bradley Wells. New York: Henry Holt & Co. 1935. $2.

Reviewed by BEN RAY REDMAN

THE Great War was a wide-flung and complex pattern of many small wars, fought on many fronts, and, while the bare bones of the entire monstrosity are already preserved in the official histories of numerous countries, literature is only gradually furnishing those bones with flesh and color and a kind of enduring life. Countless volumes have given American and English readers a semblance of familiarity with the war as it was fought on the Western, Italian, Russian, and Mesopotamian fronts, and with the war at sea between England and Germany; but there are many sections of the total picture that are still dim or void.

The chief novelty of Roger Vercel's "Captain Conan," which was awarded the Prix Goncourt in 1934, is that it casts light upon one of these dark places. M. Vercel, translating his own experiences into fiction, writes of the members of a French regiment in the "Salonika Army," during the months which followed the Armistice of November 11, 1918. He writes of their frightful march across the mountains and through the forests of the Balkans; of their triumphant entry into Bucharest, along the flag-hung Calea Victoria, when their gun muzzles were stuffed with roses; of their occupation of Sofia, capital of the beaten Bulgars; and of their final clashes with the Russian Reds on the muddy banks of the Dneister. He writes crisply, coldly, frankly, and with authority, putting his story into the mouth of an imaginary Lieutenant Norbert.

But it is with character, not with events, that the author is most concerned; with the characters of men who, having survived four and a half years of fighting and killing, saw themselves confronted by peace,—a state long unfamiliar and now bewildering.

Everyone who was with a fighting unit when the Armistice was signed was conscious of a strange phenomenon. All about him, he saw individuals suddenly emerging from a common livery that had cloaked their differences. For months or years, the wearers of this livery had been blindly and instinctively intent upon living so long as luck would let them; now they were preparing to live again in their own and greatly differing ways, according to their divers lights, interests, emotions, and fortunes. Former civilians shed their livery with a shrug of horror or indifference; the professional soldiers delightedly reverted to their paper-work, their endless drills, inspections, and fatigues. For the latter the war had been a disorderly interruption of an orderly career; now, thank heavens, they could return to tradition and routine, with no more amateur warriors to annoy them. It was a strange period and a curious phenomenon. As Roger Vercel puts it: "For the first time for four years, riflemen, grenadiers, machine-gunners, and gunners were turning back into men."

It is with this period of transition and transformation that his novel deals. Lieutenant Norbert is typical of the man who could return to civilian ways, neither better nor worse for the war, pick up the threads of commonplace existence, and live on successfully until, years later, all his war experiences would seem to him to have been those of someone else. De Scève, had it not been for a Russian bullet, would have typified the professional soldier, happily restored to his career. The Norberts were in the majority, and there were a good many De Scèves,—most of whom survived by way of the Staff. But there were, too, quite a few Captain Conans. They were birds of another color; birds damned and doomed.

ROGER VERCEL
From Les Nouvelles Littéraires

Before the war, Conan had been a draper in a small French town; millinery had been his side-line. The war had transformed him into a killer.

> It wasn't the gun that won the war [he once said], it was the knife. A soldier who'd stand up to a tank would run away at the mere idea that some fellows were coming along with the knife. There may have been three thousand of us—not more—who used it on all the fronts. It was those three thousand who really won the war. The rest had only to clear up after us.

The war proved Conan to be possessed of a special, violent, and savage kind of courage. But once peace came, that kind of courage was not merely shameful; it was criminal. He, and the hardened bullies of his "storm troop," were heroes out of a job. With the advent of peace, Conan knew that he was done. Can you ask a dog that has been trained to hunt to live on salad? Only during the war had Conan felt that he was really alive. "Peace is the time when shirkers and rotters have the right to trample on the real men, just to take their revenge on them for their four years' belly-ache. A foul, filthy business!"

Conan could not return to what he had been, he was incapable of a second transformation. He could only decay into a monstrous caricature of the man his storm troopers had known. At least, that is the way Roger Vercel chooses to end his tale. Real life often furnished other endings. There were Conans who did not drink themselves into obesity under the eyes of shrewish wives. Some fought for or against the Bolsheviks until the last White army had failed. Later they fought against the Riffs, or went hunting trouble in Mexico or China; or found a racket to their liking, such as smuggling yellow men into the United States, or running guns into Abyssinia. But, wherever their steps led them, they went in search of danger; and some of them are still seeking it. There is always enough fighting and killing and perilous adventure to keep the Conans of this world occupied. However, it is Roger Vercel's novel, and he has the right to end it as he chooses. If his conclusion seems underlined with a slightly heavy hand, it is at least dramatically fitting.

"Captain Conan" is an interesting and vigorous contribution to the literature of the war. Conan himself is a character of only two dimensions, boldly drawn in black and white, but he is far from being the whole book. He commands only a portion of our interest. The most moving incident in the story is the trial and conviction of the coward, René Erlane; and it is the contemptible but pitiable figure of this spineless, helpless, terrified mother's-boy, caught up and crushed by the machine of the war, that will remain longest in the reader's memory.

Ben Ray Redman is the author of "Down in Flames," and served as a single-seater scout pilot with 79 Squadron, Royal Flying Corps, on the Ypres front.

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In the Black Belt

GOD SHAKES CREATION. By David Cohn. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1935. $3.50.

Reviewed by ROBERT RYLEE

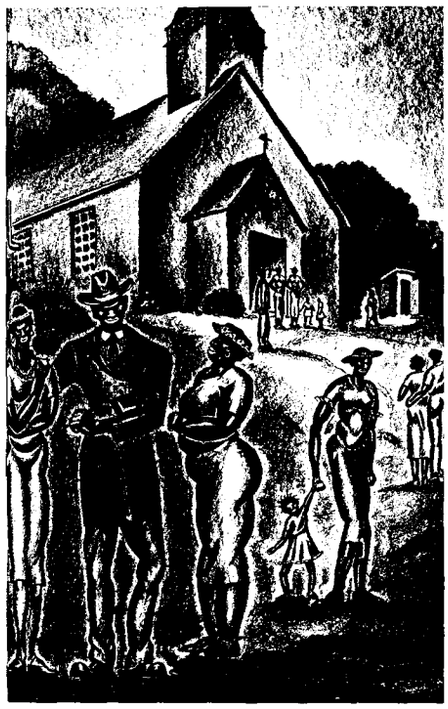
THE region of the State of Mississippi known as the Delta is a long plain lying between the hills and the Mississippi River which, in Mr. Cohn's words, "begins in the lobby of the Peabody Hotel in Memphis and ends on Catfish Row in Vicksburg." Mr. Cohn's easy-moving study of that region is amazing for two things: complete sanity and absolute authenticity. No one familiar with the Delta could doubt the facts he presents any more than he could doubt the existence of the hoary cypresses and the swamps they grow in. And when he deals with the white-black problem, the Delta's Cross, Mr. Cohn is a fervent and successful seeker after intelligent and fair pictures. The Delta has not often been so dealt with.

Most of "God Shakes Creation" is devoted to the Negroes themselves, their crimes, loves, and religious practices. The white people are treated chiefly in connection with their attitude toward and relationships with the Negroes. Mr. Cohn has none of the common lust to be sensational, though his many illustrative anecdotes often achieve bright color. He makes no attempt to offer a solution for the Negro problem, but rather gives us the present facts about the some 300,000 Negroes in this area, outnumbering the whites three to one.

And the facts are true and depressing. The Delta Negro has no great intelligence. This seems to be inherent. The very white people who try hardest to help him feel that the Negro himself places the greatest obstacles in their way. The Negro regards work as the evil necessity of life; he works as little as possible, saves nothing for the future, indulges his sex instincts in complete freedom, believes in magic and visits hoodoo doctors. Yet he has a frequently shrewd sense of humor and is full of melodious song. He is often a lovable character.

ALONG THE RIVER

Drawings on this page by Lucian Dent from "God Shakes Creation."



SUNDAY MORNING

The book can be criticized only for being incomplete. A more exhaustive historical and sociological study is sorely needed. For example, along with malaria, yellow fever, and the Mississippi River, one would be interested to know something of the enervating effects of heat and political corruption, both of a savage order, on the Delta people. The present economic picture is left untouched and it is all-important to the Delta. It is highly probable that the large plantation is forever doomed. And the mechanical cotton picker, now generally accepted as a fact, if released, would bring more change across the face of Mississippi than Grant's army.

But these are minor quarrels. Mr. Cohn has broken hard ground. Mississippi will find his material as familiar as the black earth and cotton rows. But for those outsiders who want facts to complement the fictions of the past few years, this book, though incomplete, is a mighty good start.

Robert Rylee, author of a recent Book-of-the-Month Club selection, "Deep Dark River," comes of a family long resident in Tennessee and Mississippi. His own novel laid its scene in the latter state and took a Negro for hero.

Derring-Do in Old Provence

GOLD OF TOULOUSE. By John Clayton. New York: Kendall & Sharp. 1935. $3.

Reviewed by WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

STRANGELY enough this novel turns out to be the first volume of a romantic trilogy of which "Dew in April," published some time ago, was the second. It is unusual for a trilogy to appear in this sequence.

I found "Dew in April" vivid and stirring, and I find much the same qualities in the present book. But the life in the convent in "Dew in April" seemed to me somewhat more original and difficult material than, for instance, the sadism of Raymond VI of Toulouse and all the horrors of dungeon and torture chamber early in the present volume. Yet this is the book in which one should first become acquainted with the gargantuan bulk of Fraire Hilarius (who appears also in "Dew in April"). Mr. Clayton differentiates his characters in a clear-cut manner. One of them, with as much personality as any, is, in fact, a horse—the black stallion, Baltazar, charger of Señor Don Marcos de Nizana y Léon, the hero of the tale. La Blanca Rosa, lost Mountain Moth, the only child for whom her Northern father is still quartering the seas in lonely quest, is certainly all that the heroine of a romantic historical novel should be! The wicked Count of Toulouse, who is not to be confused with Raymund of the First Crusade (as this story is laid two centuries later); the great tun of a friar; the dark Spanish hero; these are some of the figures of the tale, set against a background of thirteenth-century Provence and involved in Simon de Montfort's bloody crusade against the Albigensian heretics, one of Mother Church's more ferocious forays which laid waste a gay and smiling land. You can easily perceive, therefore, that there is plenty of action in the book. Those who in their youth followed with bated breath Gerard and Denis through the pages of "The Cloister and the Hearth," or exulted in Stanley J. Weyman's "Under the Red Robe" and "The House of the Wolf," will find the same sort of excitement here. The story gallops along with gusto—and we can see Hollywood gobbling it up. But, for all that, it is written often with real beauty, and the research behind it appears to be sound. Mr. Clayton possesses no mean dramatic—not to say melodramatic—gift and creates the right atmosphere for a tale of derring-do! It may be old formula, but Mr. Clayton is a born story-teller and, inasmuch as he has obviously thoroughly enjoyed writing this romance, one enjoys reading it. The third volume of the trilogy, to be published next Spring, will be called "The Anger of the North."

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The Bowling Green by Christopher Morley

Hunting Mark's Remainders

"I WAS having a good enough time seeing them hunt for my remainders" said Huck Finn on Jackson's Island, while the ferryboat went cruising to and fro—filled with people and firing cannon, "trying to make my carcass come to the top."

Very likely Mark himself would recall that scene if he could hear all the literary critics, this month of his centennial, booming away. The carcass won't come up by solemn gunfire as to whether Mark was really a tragic frustrated figure; whether he was Huck himself, the bad boy locked in and disciplined and forbidden to curse or smoke; whether he was a pessimist, or a clown, or a raging radical seduced by shekels. Huck himself lies behind the log, "powerful lazy and comfortable." Mark Twain was, in the deepest meaning of the word, a humorist; and the one quality that so few of his commentators (I except the admirable Leacock) have brought to bear upon his work is a sense of humor. Dreadful as it seems to have to say it (to a generation confident of its own ultimacy) William Dean Howells—writing *My Mark Twain* in the immediate sorrow of his friend's death—dealt with Mark in more deeply observant ken than most critics since. "A humorist," said Howells as long ago as 1901, "in whom the sense of the droll is never parted from the sense of the dreadful."

Every detonation of the boatload of critics is an honest charge, well rammed and loudly exploded; but so far as I can see these blasts of blank do not bring up the carcass. For Mark, like every great artist, was the creature of a thousand moods; every man in his humor. He was the loaf of bread plugged with quicksilver (these were the humble witchcraft of the body-seekers). Of the great creators it is usually best to know nothing but their work. To *Huckleberry Finn* one can pay the highest tribute one ever pays to any book: I wish to gosh I'd never read it so I could have it all before me. To be a boy again reading it that unforgettable first time—and very likely missing many of its subtlest touches. And then I am reminded of an extraordinary statement in Van Wyck Brooks's truly brilliant *Ordeal of Mark Twain,* a book which set the fashion in Mark Twain criticism for some 15 years; a book of flashing insight and of noble spirit, but which did as much harm as only a brilliant book can do. "Who does not see in the extraordinary number of books about boys and boyhood written by American authors" (said Mr. Brooks) "the surest sign of arrested moral development." That is what I mean by approaching the work of a humorist without a sense of humor. And the famous comic passage about the "solitary oesophagus," not a very good joke I grant, Mr. Brooks bitterly instanced to prove that the tendency of Mark's humor was "to degrade beauty." Mr. Lewis Mumford, more aggrieved still, brooded over a fatuous message that Mark wrote for Walt Whitman's 70th birthday (certainly a silly letter, probably hounded out of him by some committee) and found it evi-

HUCKLEBERRY FINN
From the first edition

dence of Mark's "fundamental barbarism."

The damned human race, as Mark called us, never shows its invincible stupidity more plainly than in its extraordinary querulity about its great benefactors—instead of simply enjoying their gifts. Obviously Mark Twain's humor was freakish and often crude; his speeches, as they exist in print, the merest occasional guff; his philosophic and religious notions, which he innocently supposed so rending, are childishly banal; the long-annunciated notebooks and secret writings do not seem to contain any very startling revelations. They are not only posthumous but posthumorous. He was "spoiled by civilization," says one biographer; he was "frustrated by life" say others. But what the deuce? Being spoiled and frustrated, and yet getting in a few good licks here and there, is the first premise of existence. Pure spirit is spoiled and frustrated by the mere fact of having to be incarnated at all. Chesterton once wrote a delicious piece about those frantic liberators who are always wanting to release something or other from the very condition of its being. If you free a tiger from the humiliation of wearing stripes, said G. K. C., it is no longer a tiger; if you beg a triangle to burst from the bondage of living in three sides it perishes lamentably as a triangle. Civilization may have currycombed Mark a bit, but also it gave him the impetus to be something more than an Artemus Ward. It spoiled Bret Harte too, but Harte wrote some pretty grand tales. My sympathy is all with those wise and peaceable folks who all these years have been reading and enjoying *Tom Sawyer* and *Huck Finn* (the other books are fast fading out) quite unaware that they are supposed to be Freudian testimony. Huck and Nigger Jim go drifting down Endless River, and behind all the learned argument I hear their voices. "It warn't often that we laughed—only a little kind of a low chuckle." And I occasionally recall what everyone else seems to have forgotten, the Author's Notice:—

> *"Persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot."*

It has been encouraging to observe the general sanity, one might say the general decency, of the homage brought out by this hundredth birthday. As in the case of Anatole France (the two, so different, show interesting parallels) the depression is over. Young doctrinaires will always, every so often, crowd aboard ferryboats to shoot cannon. It does no lasting damage, often much good. The air has been cleared of some hypocrisies and false idolatries; now, until some new theory of literary ontology becomes modish, they will let him alone to be the multiple entertainment which was his destiny. There was good reason why Mark Twain shot up to apotheosis and then, in the recent era of horsewind and general deflatus, had to suffer such horrid expounding. He fitted perfectly into a Great American Legend (we've seen it lately in Will Rogers). That is, that a man risen from rough and tumble pioneer circumstances can make merry at Kings and Emperors, outwit philosophers and scholars, hobnob with financiers and generals, take apart foreign languages and cultures and show how funny they are, know more about Shakespeare than people who have spent their lives studying him, and more about religion than the Archbishop of Canterbury. To the American mass, the largest articulate mythopoeic group, this doctrine

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is wafer, wine and hassocks. When these extraordinary lustres are found (as they can only be) upon a man of enormous talent, charm, and courage, it is likely that he be publicized more for what is preposterously outside his true compass than for his essential gift. Not unnaturally his publishers and zealots seek to keep alive the whole mass of his work, including scraps, shavings, and jetsam. The cycle inevitably rotates to a damnation for what he actually did best. There were times, in the past decade, when it seemed as though some of the highbrow critics must have handled that rattlesnake skin that brought bad luck to Huck and Jim.

But—like Jim—Mark Twain had a hairy breast which was bound to bring him luck in the end. If you ever had any doubts, try *Huck Finn* again. There never was writing more perfectly adapted to its purpose. If you have been told that Mark always attempted "to degrade beauty" note the exquisite little pictures of the great river, always kept within the range of what a boy would notice. "There was freckled places on the ground where the light sifted down through the leaves, and the freckled places swapped about a little, showing there was a little breeze up there." You will not miss the slashing dexter impressionism of some rapid passages: Huck's fright at the strange campfire—"it made me feel like a person had cut one of my breaths in two and I only got half, and the short half too." Or when the raft is run down by a steamboat; or dawn on the river and the sounds across the wide water. That galoot seen chopping on a raft far across the stream, the axe flashing in the sunlight, the *k'chunk* not arriving until the blade glitters up for the following stroke—there he goes, chopping away for as long as print holds magic. And every vine-hung cove and creek with its willows and cottonwoods where they hid raft or canoe is dear to memory; you'll gaze in search of them, as I did, the first time you cross that stream. No one who has ever crossed Mississippi can be unhappy about American literature.

It would be silly, or impertinent, to point out the things you'll notice. You'll find plenty of flaws: occasional japes of the lecture-platform sort; and flashes of anger where Mark forgets Huck in his passion to describe something he hates—the attempted lynching of Colonel Sherburn, for instance; or the sardonic descriptions of Arkansaw rustics. (If Dickens had done this how sore everyone would have been.) Mark Twain shows himself always of the great breed, the Shakespeare-Cervantes-Voltaire blood, in his hatred and contempt of the mob.

Of the most famous incidents I say nothing: they are got by heart in most readers. To me one of the finest touches in the whole yarn is when Huck and Jim find a wooden leg in the floating house. "We couldn't find the other one, though we hunted all around." They assumed of course that wooden legs, like real ones, come in pairs.

Too many critics, thinking about Mark Twain, have hunted for a wooden leg that never was there.

In all the recent palaver I've seen no mention of one of the happiest things ever written about Mark Twain. It comes from the man who, of all our present writers, has the spirit most akin to his; who also was raised close to the great river; and it's in a book that Mark would have loved to write, though he wouldn't have printed it. It's called *Chapters for the Orthodox*, by Don Marquis. God, interviewed by a reporter, happens to let out that Mark Twain has a river of his own in Heaven. I'm quoting from Mr. Marquis:—

> "It's an immense river, thousands of miles long—millions of miles long, in fact, when Mark wants it that long; and he has steamboat races on it all the time. You never saw such a spectacle as one of Mark's steamboat races, with Mark on the deck of the winning ship, archangels, saints and devils lined up on the banks of the river shouting and cheering, the boats belching fire and smoke, and Mark making the welkin ring with profanity."
>
> "Profanity?" The reporter was a little surprised.
>
> "Listen," said Jehovah, "and get me right. Of course, I have an objection to ordinary profanity. It's common and vulgar and undignified. It is, in a way, and if I ever wanted to take the matter up officially, an affront to *me*. But Mark's profanity! It's different! It's a gorgeous lyric. Just to listen to it is a liberal education. When I found that a lot of angels and saints were going down to the bank of the river to listen to it, I was a little doubtful at first of its effect on them.
>
> "Mark ran his river, with one of his most exciting races going on, right through the middle of Hell one time, and Satan turned blue with envy and admiration. He said that for pure *style* and interest it laid over anything he could invent. He came and begged me to let him have Mark and his river for a while. I put it up to Mark, and he was all for going. But he didn't go, in the end."
>
> "Why not?"
>
> "His wife and William Dean Howells wouldn't let him," said Jehovah. "They said it would look bad . . . people wouldn't understand . . ."

SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S DOUBLE-CROSTIC (No. 83)
WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY
—"TO W. B."

From the brake the Nightingale
  Sings exulting to the Rose;
Though he sees her waxing pale
  In her passionate repose;
. . . .
Fading even while she glows:
  Though he knows
  How it goes—
Knows of last year's Nightingale
  Dead with last year's Rose.

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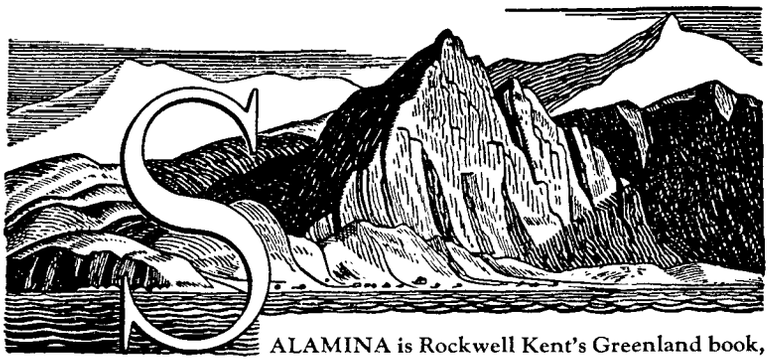

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Literature and the Social Left

(*Continued from page 4*)

by them to capitalism, is peculiar to America and does not exist in countries like France or England, capitalist though they are. The revolutionary movement is welcomed by them as a sort of get-together affair, a break in the dreadful isolation, some acknowledgment that what they do is of importance to somebody or to some group. Isidor Schneider is one of the real writers of the group; there is personality and distinction in all he contributes. While many of the writers of the social left, as can be seen from these contributions, have shifted their ground from what was held a few years ago, that literature should be class-propaganda and nothing else, it is noticeable now that the best of the writers represented demand simply the expression of the worker's life in literature. There are some very ancient heresies which the artist has always had to fight against: every time a new political or social movement arises in any country we have the propagandists in full force demanding that literature should be at its service. During the Irish Literary Revival, the movement for national independence demanded that the new literature should be propaganda for it, as had been most of the old and now forgotten writing. Plays were hissed, poetry was mocked at, writers abused if their work could not be fitted into the national propaganda. The conception of art held by people who do not know all that there is to be known about it, is that it should advance some idea of practical or social worth; in fact, a great number of young writers who are isolated from strong literary currents begin with this idea themselves. And why should we not have propaganda through literature for what we conceive to be worthy causes?

The answer to this must be a long one—too long for this article—but even at the risk of leaving it inadequate some explanation has to be offered in the space at my disposal. Propaganda is the technique of selling people a conviction,—intellectually, a not very subtle affair. Literature has not this directness nor simplicity: it comes out of a fusion of memory and desire, of imagination and emotion in the mind of one who has a sense of artistic form. Art, in brief, may be described as organism while propaganda is mechanism. And what is the difference between these two? In an organism the whole comes before the parts and conditions the parts; in a mechanism the parts come before the whole and make the whole. You can put in an order for a mechanism but not for an organism, and when he wrote to this effect, Lenin was ordering a mechanism—

> Literature must become part of the general proletariat movement, a cog in the vast unified socialist mechanism which is set in motion by the conscious advance guard of the entire working-class.

As a matter of actual fact, the known literary forms are very poor vehicles for propaganda; in poetry and in fiction the propaganda is so immediately noticed as a distortion that it is ineffectual. In Grace Lumpkin's "John Stevens" all the arguments against capitalism are given in a fictional structure. But these would have no effect on anybody who was not already convinced. The proper form for propaganda is oratory and pamphlets. One good orator or good pamphleteer is worth thousands of writers in a cause, just as a good preacher is the best propagandist for a religious idea. Now do oratory and pamphlets, both forms outside literature, ever become literature? Sometimes out of the ruck of oratory and pamphleteering there comes a speech or a pamphlet so informed by the imagination, so quickened by a passion of indignation, so illuminated by philosophy or wisdom and linked to some lasting idea that it does reach to the region of art; it can last as art even when, as in the case of the Drapier Letters, the object of propaganda is difficult to recall.

In the case of the writers represented in these two volumes who aim at mere propaganda, the result is neither literature, good trade-writing, nor good propaganda. But what the revolutionary movement has done for others is to show them new material. Many of the contributions which represent a serious effort to cope with this artistically, that is with skill, emotion, and imagination, reach a memorable distinction. Very often, if there might be said to be any propaganda—that is an attempt to put over a conviction or to win adherence to a cause—the effect is the opposite of what is being aimed at. Clifford Odets's plays, for instance, are poor propaganda for the leadership of the proletariat, because the harsh, individualistic minds shown in them, alienate sympathy.

Among the poets and poetry that stand out with distinction are Isidor Schneider with "In a Hotel Lobby" and "To the Museums;" James Neugass with "Thalassa, Thalassa," a poem whose first stanza rises to remarkable beauty, and Alfred Hayes with "To Otto Bauer;" in what might be termed the folk poetry section, there are some memorable pieces like "Death-house Blues." The critics include some well-known writers, but among the younger and less well-known is a very able piece of writing by Bernard Smith. Among this group one finds, too, several papers of quite remarkable nonsense. The young writers include many who still have time enough and energy enough to dissipate it all around, but life is short and energy is not all-embracing, and I can prophesy that in the near future the outstanding talents will drop everything else except the production of literature, which does not at all mean that their sympathies will not always be with the workers and the under-dogs.

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CONTEMPORARY POETRY: BY WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

ROBINSON JEFFERS has proven the power of his pinions. I am glad to have a new book of his, "Solstice and Other Poems" published by Random House (who do such beautiful books) in such fine large type. I am glad to hear that the first trade edition of 2500 copies was sold out before publication on October first and that the special edition of three hundred copies was oversubscribed. For Jeffers is always worth reading, and no one can now deny him stature.

"Solstice" begins with a dramatic poem hewn out of the closing chapters of the Niblung Saga, a poem which, for dramatic effect, it seems to me should have stopped at the end of part IX, though the ghostly remainder has a certain interest. As to the next and title poem, Jeffers stoops upon this material like his own "Cruel Falcon," whom he conceives Man's soul as envying in the short lyric bridging the two works. For "Solstice" deals with a strange mother's murder of her young children; and although Jeffers is always trying to explain such violent acts to us with a sort of underhum of symbolism, I can see little in the woman but egomania and sadism, nor, if she "had too much energy to die," care particularly that she is one with

a fierce unsubdued core
[That] Lives in the high rock in the heart of the continent,
affronting the bounties of civilization and Christ,
Troublesome, contemptuous, archaic, with thunder-storm hair
and snowline eyes, waiting. . . .

But that one feels such a force in wild nature itself is indubitable, and I have nothing but praise for Mr. Jeffers's descriptions. In fact he ends the poem with what I think is the most superb simile applied to the Rocky Mountains that I have ever read:

Where the tall Rockies pasture with their heads down, white-spotted and streaked like piebald horses, sharp withers
And thunder-scarred shoulders against the sky,
standing with their heads down,
the snow-manes blow in the wind;
But they will lift their heads and whinny when the riders come, they will stamp with their hooves and shake down the glaciers.

Jeffers will never get away from the rock and the hawk and the cruel trap of life and the uncaring face of nature. His themes have become rather redundant. But he is wielding some of the grandest language of our time. He seems to have little flexibility in his temperament but his stoicism is impressive. If I had a criticism of his method, I think that a line from Robert Nathan's foreword to his own new book would give me what I want. Nathan says, with extreme wisdom, "I have never believed that size and art were one." I am, myself, inclined to think that Jeffers sometimes confuses size with art. He has, however, done one remarkable thing if no more (and in my own opinion he has done a good deal more), he has put the desolate, haunted, gigantic spirit of the California Coast on paper as no one has ever done before him. The sadistic people of his poems are tortured phantoms of that Coast, emblems of blind ancientness, without hope for man's world. But sometimes I fear that environment has well-nigh devoured this poet, until it has become excessively difficult for him to hear the desperate but dauntless voice of average humanity. It is not well to live too long aloof in one place.

In speaking of "Selected Poems" (Knopf) of *Robert Nathan,* I shall immediately lay myself open to the charge of log-rolling, inasmuch as the volume is very kindly dedicated "To Three Benéts." But I do not intend to log-roll, and I do not for a moment think that Mr. Nathan's poems are as good as those of *Mr. A. E. Housman,* of whom he reminds one only in the great carefulness of his selecting from his work. Out of all his work he will let stand but thirty-six poems, many of which are sonnets and the remainder short lyrics. What you do get from his work is the expression of a quiet courage, and a faintly amused sadness. The melancholy of his people is nowhere better expressed than in Nathan's

DIASPORA

Thou, Israel, on a foreign shore,
So low, so low, that once was great,
What altars do thy sons adore?
The golden calf, the scarlet whore,
Phoenicia's greed, Assyria's hate.

No more, Jerusalem, no more
Shalt thou behold thine ancient state,
Or round thee in the cloudy gloom
Remark the heavenly advocate.
The Syrian desert shrouds his fate,
The Lydian wilderness his tomb.

I think that Mr. Nathan will chiefly survive in American literature through some of his extraordinary prose, but he has a persuasive and musical way with the sonnet. "The book," he says, "is small, but in so far as it is able it sings." And that is no less than the truth. In his brief foreword he pays his respects to the "modern young gentlemen of England" saying:

> I respect their force and energy, although few lines of their verse ever come to my mind. Their brains do not tire as soon as their hearts. But here, within these pages, you will find little wit and less invention. There is nothing here of more importance than what a child might sing, or a lover remember.

That is well said. And it strikes me shrewdly that "what a child might sing, or a lover remember," provided the art is there, will always be acceptable to the human race. Whatever systems of society we may contemplate, we will remain beings with the same emotions.

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WRITE YOUR OWN TICKET!

WITH your help, we are planning an interesting and unusual feature for this year's Christmas Number of *The Saturday Review*. It will be a plebiscite of the likes and dislikes of Saturday Review readers during the literary year 1935. All readers are invited, in fact urged, to fill in their preferences and pet aversions in the spaces below. Tear out and mail this page to the Managing Editor, or if you can't bear to mutilate a copy of the SRL, copy the questions and write the answers on a separate sheet of paper. You don't have to sign your name if you don't want to, but if you do, use the margin of this page. All votes will be counted, and the results will be printed in the Christmas issue.

IMPORTANT: *All votes must be in the hands of the Managing Editor by Monday, November 25th*, and the earlier the better. The date of the Christmas issue is December 7th.

HERE IS YOUR BALLOT

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Please tear out this page and mail it now. In order to discourage repeaters—not that we suspect anybody—this blank ballot will not be printed again. Send your votes to the Managing Editor, The Saturday Review, 25 West 45th Street, New York City. *Your vote must be received before November 25th.* Do Your Christmas Voting Early.

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Wordsworth as Man and Poet

Two Reviews by GEORGE McLEAN HARPER

WORDSWORTH'S ANTI-CLIMAX. By Willard L. Sperry. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. 1935. $2.50.

POETS have generally died young, if not in body, yet in spirit. Wordsworth had the audacity to live till he was eighty, and quite naturally the poetry of his last forty years has less imaginative originality and less verbal magic than his earlier work. This may be called an inevitable misfortune, but not properly a fault. There are some readers and critics who care only for invention and verbal magic in poetry. They have small regard for poetry of exposition and argument. Most of Wordsworth's later poetry differs from his earlier not only in freshness but in purpose. His craftsmanship has improved, his technique has become perfect, but the man has changed, and the thoughts and principles which underlie his work are now determined in the main by new views of life.

Dean Sperry is not the first, though he is by far the best equipped, of those critics who have tried to indicate the point at which the change occurred and the reasons why it occurred. He has brought to his task an alert and open mind, rich literary culture, a very unusual acquaintance with the periodicals of the nineteenth century, and a lively, natural style. His book is instructive and good company. It is less fantastic than those of Mr. Herbert Read and Mr. Hugh I'Anson Fausset, who delved with the implements of psycho-analysis in the same field; and it is not such special pleading as Miss Edith Batho's exaltation of the man Wordsworth in his last forty years. There is only one rather disgusting, overstrained, and prying chapter in Dean Sperry's book; and as contemporary biography goes, that is a good record.

His main idea is that virtually all of Wordsworth's "good" poetry was written in a "golden decade," presumably between 1797 and 1807, though he seems uncertain about the dates, and that his "decline" was due chiefly to his holding fast to a "system" of composition. The weakness of this contention is that the later poetry, at least after 1814, does not conform to the system, which was inherent in the poems composed between 1797 and 1807. But there was a change, and on the whole a sad one. Dean Sperry is right in attributing it in large measure to the poet's premature aging. Though the years brought wider knowledge, they blunted the keen edge of sensation and reduced his courage. Responsibility made him cautious. But his artistic skill as a versifier improved with the years, and a rich harvest of glorious lines and exquisite passages, with here and there a whole perfect poem, can be gleaned from his autumnal fields.

Dean Sperry's book lacks coherence, or at least requires more than one reading to discover its precise significance. What is the verdict, and does it follow logically from the evidence and the argument? This is what a reader will ask, and the answer is not altogether satisfactory. In detail there is much that is valuable, original, wise, and penetrating, the rich deposit of learning and experience. But there is a too ready assumption that almost all Wordsworth's poetry written after a loosely defined "golden age" is uninspired and unimportant. We have only to remember "Laodamia," "Dion," "The Pillar of Trojan," and a score of the finest sonnets in our language, to perceive the narrowness of this view.

THE EARLY LETTERS OF WILLIAM AND DOROTHY WORDSWORTH (1787-1805). Arranged and edited by Ernest de Selincourt. New York: Oxford University Press. 1935. $8.75.

IF a person were lonely or socially unsatisfied he might find in this volume an ideal environment of warm human sympathy, natural behavior, small and great activities, comic and tragic occurrences, strong passions, and deep-rooted principles. Heaven be praised, William Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy did not belong to a literary coterie or a bohemian "settlement," were not "arty," even in their most romantic years. There never was a Lake School of Poets, and the professorial term "Romanticism," which college lecturers find so convenient, does not include these very original and quite unclassifiable spirits. They reveal themselves in their letters as normal human beings, associating intimately with many relatives and friends, and living on comfortable terms with neighbors of various occupations and degrees of culture. We see them here as they lived from day to day and at such close range that we can easily imagine ourselves belonging to their circle and sharing their experiences. Where they differ from other people is in the vividness of their perceptions, the strength of their feelings, their command of expressive and exact language, and especially their brave determination to live according to their own plan, keeping themselves unspotted from the world.

The earliest letters are by Dorothy in her sixteenth year. William's begin when he was twenty. The present volume brings the writers down to a time when she was thirty-four and he thirty-five. It is the first of a series whose number no man can tell, even Professor de Selincourt making no prediction when I saw him a year ago half buried in piles of faded and almost undecipherable manuscript. Of the 241 letters in this first volume, 102 are printed from manuscript, seventy-eight are reproduced from other books in which they appeared in full, and sixty-one are entire letters that have hitherto been incompletely or incorrectly published. Most of those in the past two categories were used and often misused by Professor William Knight in his three-volume edition of "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," 1907, long since out of print. Knight employed a selective process, omitting much that is now of interest. He misread many passages, and

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his dating is not reliable. Professor de Selincourt, with his fine sense of values and his extraordinary industry, has reproduced the texts faithfully and, with two or three exceptions, supplied the proper dates. The accuracy of his editing is beyond praise, especially when one considers that the letters were written with goose-quills and bad ink and that William was a wretched penman. With hesitation I venture to suggest that Wordsworth arrived at Orleans on December 6, 1792, instead of two weeks later, as a footnote would indicate, and that Letter No. 27, copied from Christopher Wordsworth's Memoirs of his uncle, should not be dated 1792. There are two very long and significant gaps in the correspondence, one from August 30, 1793, to February 17, 1794, the other from February 27, 1799, to May 13, 1799. In the former of these periods it is probable that the poet was making an heroic, though foolhardy, visit to Paris during the height of the Terror; in the latter he and his sister were wandering in Germany, no one knows precisely where.

From these letters it is evident that Wordsworth in his early manhood was almost as much interested in politics as in poetry. He appears as an adventurous, speculative, philanthropic, and public-spirited character. With his friend Mathews he planned to establish a liberal periodical in which to express his democratic views. This was in 1794, and it is curious that Coleridge actually carried out a similar project in 1795, before he and Wordsworth had become acquainted. Down to 1797 the note of observation and contemplation of nature is less frequently sounded than the more strident tones of political protest and satire. "The most sacred of all property," he declares, "is the property of the poor." "Cataracts and mountains are good occasional society, but they will not do for constant companions." Dorothy shared his humane aspirations, realizing them in practice by daily acts of kindness to the village people among whom they lived; and her letters abound, no less than her brother's, in descriptions of natural objects and accounts of happy rambles. Both William and Dorothy are revealed as tender, intense natures, open-hearted, expansive, and passionate. Her adoration of him and his gentleness with her are illustrated in her remark, "Really it is almost a pleasure to be ill, he is so good and loving to me."

The letters written in Germany in 1799 are of special interest. One of them contains variants of two of the famous "Lucy" poems and fragments of "The Prelude." Under date of April 9, 1801, there is a long rejected passage of "Michael," and in several places light is thrown upon the puzzling changes in Coleridge's share of "Lyrical Ballads" in successive editions. All praise is due to the editor of this much-needed collection. That he may persevere and finish the series and thus add a third splendid monument to the honor of Wordsworth and to his own name, must be the wish of all lovers of poetry.

George McLean Harper, who recently retired from Princeton University, is one of the leading American authorities on Wordsworth.

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Books for Children

Some time ago now J. T. C. of Washington, D. C., *wrote me a most charming letter in which she drew a sprightly picture of her three children, fourteen, sixteen, and twelve, who apparently persist in disappointing her own love for literature by maintaining an adamant resistance to reading. They are intelligent, vivacious youngsters, according to her description, with eagerness and vim, but somehow have up to this time failed to respond to exposure to books. Since their mother herself revelled in them as a child, she is most eager to have them discover the delight which they can yield, but she is reconciled to the probability of their not liking such tales as were her own favorites, the novels of Scott, Dickens, Lytton, etc. She thinks perhaps something humorous would capture their interest, and she wants them to form their taste on good literature.*

PROBABLY the small boy doesn't live who can't be enticed into spending hours with a book if that book is TOM SAWYER or HUCKLEBERRY FINN. This year of celebration of Mark Twain's birth is a good time to start him off on that writer, for if he does yield to his blandishments he'll find articles on every side in magazine and newspaper to inform him as to Twain's life and achievements. He's one of the writers I should think would be sure fire with boys of the age of J. T. C.'s sons, and if their young sister doesn't like him as much as they do she'll probably be far more enthusiastic than they over Jane Austen's PRIDE AND PREJUDICE. I read that most charming of novels at the age she is now and though I've read it almost every year since that now distant winter have never demoted it from the place in my affections it won then. I wonder how a girl of the present day would take to Frances Burney's EVELINA which I read a year earlier than PRIDE AND PREJUDICE and found entrancing. It would be worth trying her out on it anyway, even if she finds it too remote from present-day feminine codes and behavior to win her enthusiasm. Both she and her brothers, to come down to a contemporary author, would probably enjoy Booth Tarkington's PENROD, and I have no doubt that they would find Winston Churchill's RICHARD CARVEL absorbing reading. Then if they want adventure and excitement there's the long range from Dumas's THREE MUSKETEERS and COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO through Sienkievicz's THE DELUGE and PAN MICHAEL, Lew Wallace's BEN HUR, Stephen Crane's RED BADGE OF COURAGE, and Stanley Weyman's UNDER THE RED ROBE to Kingsley and John Buchan and Anthony Hope. And if J. T. C. wants to keep all three youngsters completely content on a rainy day that forbids sports in the open she might launch them on what probably, thus inaugurated, will be a lifelong habit of detective story reading, by introducing them to the immortal Sherlock Holmes. And Kipling,—surely they will never be able to resist the fascination of Kipling. And here I desist, having stuck close to the type of book which I think J. T. C. has in mind to substitute for Scott, Dickens, and Bulwer.

Richard de Bury

M. P. B. of Pittsburgh, Pa., *wants to know whether there are any published memoirs of Richard de Bury, author of* the PHILOBIBLON, *or any critical works on the author.*

The chief authority for the life of Richard Aunerville, known as Richard de Bury, bishop of Durham from 1287-1345, is William de Chambre, whose comment on him appears in an English translation by E. C. Thomas in Wharton's ANGLIA SACRA and in HISTORIÆ *Dunelmensis Tres* (Surtees Society). With the translation is the Latin text and the volume contains full biographical and bibliographical introductions. The English text is to be found also in the King's Classics, and is, too, issued by the Grolier Club. On pages 125-127 of F. H. Pritchard's FROM CONFUCIUS TO MENCKEN M. P. B. will find comment on de Bury.

Nuggets from Correspondents

For the benefit of correspondents I excerpt from letters that have been coming in during the past few weeks little nuggets that I am sure will be useful to them. *V. T.'s* recent inquiry concerning deaf characters in literature has elicited from Mary Powell Tibbitts of Chicago an enthusiastic note in regard to Lorna Rea's charming and pitiful short novel, THE HAPPY PRISONER, published just a few years ago. "You will remember," she writes, "that the heroine goes back with relief to her deafness, after a brief experience of the hearing world." To the same inquirer Edward Leonard Borgess, of Toledo, Ohio, cites a book of short mystery stories entitled THE CASES OF SUSAN DARE in which one of the tales, entitled "The Spider," revolves about the deafness of a woman named Marie. The book is published by the Crime Club. To E. F. of Stockton, Calif., who asked for books on Ceylon, E. Cockburn Kyte, librarian of Queen's University, Kingston, Ont., suggests the "little known but most interesting, A REFUGE FROM CIVILIZATION, by R. Jones-Bateman (London: Arnold)." "I notice," he adds, an announcement by the same publishers of a book by a native of Ceylon, GRASS FOR MY FEET, by Vijaya-Tunga.

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The New Books

Fiction

GIVE ME TOMORROW. By William Farquhar Payson. Dodd, Mead. 1935. $2.50.

Though the incidents are melodramatic and the characterization is frequently lacking in depth, Mr. Payson's novel gives an impression of sincerity. His central figure is an adolescent girl who cannot forget that her mother had, some years before, been executed for murder. The lesson of the book is obvious: bondage to our yesterdays brings only unhappiness and lack of personal direction; salvation lies in greeting each tomorrow with a cheer. As soon as Helena Joyce sees that she can look forward rather than backward, her lost sense of well-being returns. In the course of his alert and exciting story, Mr. Payson rings the changes on this prescription for happiness.

"Give Me Tomorrow" begins admirably, picking up the tense moments preceding the execution of Helena's mother and detailing them with grisly realism. As the novel progresses and Helena grows from eight to eighteen, alternating flight and discovery succeed one another in rapid variety. The climax is ingenious and startling rather than wholly credible, but while we are reading, we are carried along by the momentum of the narrative. Mr. Payson has a talent for keeping our nerves on edge as he accumulates quick, sensational episodes.

R. B. M.

YOUR LIFE LIES BEFORE YOU. By Harry Hansen. Harcourt, Brace. 1935. $2.50.

This slight tale, which has more value as a document than as a novel, has to do with the life of a young fellow in the newspaper game in an upper Mississippi River town at the opening of the present century. The lad is torn between vague musical ambitions and equally vague journalistic ones. The local professor of music has a daughter, and the reader can imagine the rest. The setting is worked up with considerable care, there being occasional clear glimpses of river-town life when there were still a few packets on the Mississippi, but none of the characters ever gets beyond the card-board puppet state. The book is curiously thin, the style in particular being naive.

H. M. J.

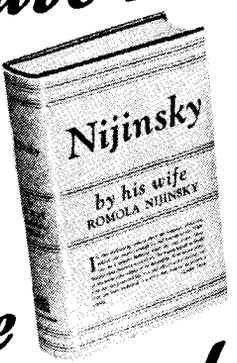
THE GINKGO TREE. By Cora Jarrett. Farrar & Rinehart. 1935. $2.50.

This is the second novel which Mrs. Jarrett has written under her own name, though her publishers tell us that she has written detective novels under a pseudonym. That news will be no surprise to any one who has read her acknowledged novels, the first of which, "Night over Fitch's Pond," was highly commended, but missed many of its proper readers through a mistaken impression that its action classed it with "crime fiction" generally. "The Ginkgo Tree" is not likely to suffer from the same misconception; but the training of the mystery writer is everywhere apparent. And that, in regard to this book at least, is praise; for the detective story, which Mr. Chesterton has called the last stronghold of morality in fiction, is very nearly the last stronghold of plot.

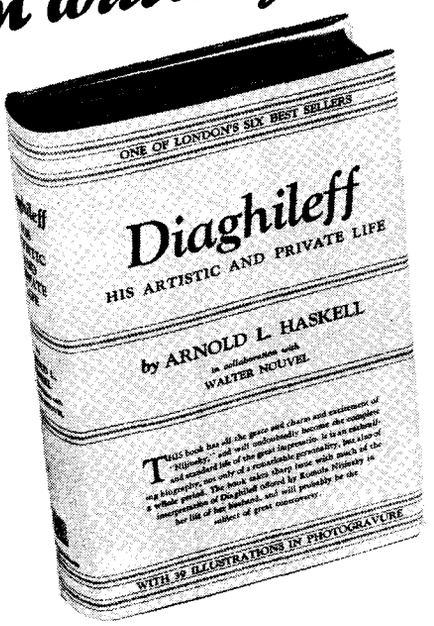
"The Ginkgo Tree" is indeed so closely plotted that it is difficult to give an idea of it without giving it away, but the initial complication must be sketched; Arnold Horne, a parvenu and wastrel, who knows that he has lost his wife's love and is jealous of his son Richard (the Freudian implication is barely hinted, once, by the suspicious Arnold himself) finds his chief pleasure in tormenting them both. Just before Richard's marriage, his father tells him that some one in the family must marry Richard's playmate, the girl next door — scandal must be averted at all costs, for the sake of Richard's mother, whose heart is weak. Richard breaks his engagement and marries Rachel, only to

(*Continued on page* 27)

If you have read this—



You have been waiting for this—



DIAGHILEFF

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By ARNOLD HASKELL

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The Amen Corner

Posting to Printing

Let others to the Printing Presse run fast,
Since after death comes glory, *Ile not haste.*

This (alas!) obsolete sentiment we have just been reading on page 334 of one of the most generous volumes ever published in that generous series, the *World's Classics.* (Need we tell you, you *must* always have the complete list handy?)[1]. It is *The Poems of Robert Herrick*[2] just reissued as re-set from the edition of F. W. Moorman, with a charming type-page adapted from that designed by Mr. Bruce Rogers for the Herrick volumes in the *Hesperides Series,* which were published last year in an edition limited to 500 copies. Only a few of these are left.[3]

The *World's Classics* edition combines in one volume, with facsimiles of the title-pages of 1647 and 1648, *Hesperides: or, The Works both Humane & Divine of Robert Herrick Esq.,* and *His Noble Numbers: or, His Pious Pieces, Wherein (amongst other things) he sings the Birth of his Christ: and sighes for his Saviours suffering on the Crosse.*

The arrival in this country of Le Corbusier, the celebrated modern French architect and city planner, lends timeliness to *The New Architectural Sculpture*[4] by Walter Raymond Agard of the University of Wisconsin, which the Oxford University Press has just published.

"The present century," writes Mr. Agard in his Preface, "may boast of being one of the greatest architectural periods in history, judged merely by the size and number of buildings that have been erected; and the recently formulated programs of public works in Europe and America give assurance that the development will soon be accelerated. But architects, and to an increasing extent the communities for which they are working, are not satisfied with this distinction. They visualize buildings that will meet the most rigorous tests of both utility and beauty. The problem of utility is primarily an engineering one; but in the realization of beauty our architects, profiting from the experience of the greatest building epochs of the past, are wisely inviting the co-operation of other artists; landscape designers, painters and sculptors."

There are 42 beautiful illustrations chosen from American and European examples.

Down Among the Dead Men[5] is an arresting title for a book on music; but Mr. Bernard Van Dieren is an arresting writer. He is the well-known English composer (born in Holland) whose work is the subject of a chapter in Cecil Gray's *Survey of Contemporary Music*[6], and the author of a book on the English sculptor Epstein (born in the U. S. A.) whose bust of Mr. Van Dieren is pictured on the jacket. The book is extremely provocative about such subjects as Meyerbeer, Busoni, and Music in Religious Worship. And what Mr. Van Dieren says about musical critics amounts to an exposé.

If you like books about the antipodes, get *A Pilgrim's Way in New Zealand*[7] by Alan Mulgan. There are 31 halftones from photographs and a frontispiece in colour.

THE OXONIAN.

(1) Write the Oxford University Press, 114 Fifth Avenue. (2) 80c. (3) 2 vols., $5.00. (4) $3.00. (5) $4.00. (6) $3.00. (7) $5.00.

Trade Winds

By P. E. G. QUERCUS

SUMNER BRITTON has long been regarded as the trade's most consecutive motorist: he drove from New Orleans to Sarasota (Fla.) in one stretch. ☞Now Charley McLean of Dayton (Ohio) qualifies as runner-up. With his friend Bill Stokes, "Father of 600 children," he made 720 miles from Ohio to Manhattan between 5 A. M. and midnight—from Dayton to Dutton. ☞Mr. Stokes's nickname is because he is head of the Children's Home in Dayton. ☞A delightful name (actual) is Miss Polly Wolly, manager of the new Chatham Bookshop which has taken over the Britannica Bookshop at 342 Madison Ave., 5th floor. Miss Kay Steiner is the new owner. ☞Cheerful old E. P. Dutton & Co. say they expect to sell "between 300,000 and 500,000" of the dollar editions of A. A. Milne juveniles during this holiday season. Their campaign begins with a half page ad in the comic section of a Sunday paper; a smart idea. ☞The bindings of the new editions, says John Macrae Jr., are "washable and vermin proof." ☞But few Milne fans are lousy. ☞Kenneth C. Dick, a young man at 20 Glover Place, Baldwin, L. I., says he is publishing on his own hook the story of how he went round the world on a stake of $2—and still has $1 left. His circular says he describes "his scintillating journey with complete abandon of egotism." Good luck to him. ☞John Dover Wilson, one of the most brilliant commentators on *Hamlet,* got his first hunch about his solution of the play "on a dull midnight train ride in the north of England."

☞As we go to press, we learn that two publishers have signed contracts with booksellers in New York based on the Feld-Crawford Fair Trade Act of the State of New York. The two publishers are Reynal & Hitchcock, who have signed an agreement with the Putnam Bookstore, and Farrar & Rinehart, who have signed agreements with six shops, including Holliday, Young Books, Channel, and Beacon. Both these publishers are offering similar agreements to all bookstores in New York State with which they do business.

☞The Fair Trade Agreement, based on the Feld-Crawford Act, provides against cutting retail prices on such new books as the publishers issue under the agreement. According to the terms of the act, the signing of a contract between a publisher and any one bookstore in New York State renders price-cutting (on the books involved) by any other bookstore in that state "actionable at the suit of any person damaged thereby."

☞Booksellers in New York State are hoping that the establishment of such agreements with the publishers will restore the price level on books and the conditions of fair competition among bookstores that were protected by the NRA retail code which was overruled last May. We understand that certain other publishers are expecting to sign contracts in the immediate future. The Viking Press intend to sign such an agreement, pending their lawyer's approval of their form of contract. Simon & Schuster are likewise waiting for the approval of their attorneys. ☞We understand further that certain other publishers do not intend to sign. We hope to print statements from some of them next week, together with the statements of other publishers who have signed agreements.

The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	*Crime, Place, Sleuth*	*Summing Up*	*Verdict*
THE CORPSE WITH THE SUNBURNED FACE *C. St. John Sprigg* (Crime Club: $2.)	Scotland Yarder travels from England to darkest Africa to get killer of rogue who stole sacred native jewels.	Just fantastic and Rider Haggardish enough to make absorbing reading. Plot rather mixed but all else is jake.	Capital
THE FAIR DEVIL *Edwin Greenwood* (Doubleday, Doran: $2.)	Succubic Phyllida kills and ruins as she pleases till bibulous Auntie and crazed clergyman settle her.	Strong family resemblance to "Deadly Dowager," but tasty mixture of cold deviltry, sardonic chuckles, and murderous whimsey.	Excellent
THE CORPSE IN THE CAR *John Rhode* (Dodd, Mead: $2.)	Discover method and know who killed Lady Misterton in her car, said Dr. Priestley—and so it was.	Different way they do certain things in Britain fog this a bit—but the stuffed cats are intriggin'.	Able
THE ELECTION BOOTH MURDER *Milton Propper* (Harpers: $2.)	Candidate slain on Election Day. Tommy Rankin threads messy political mazes to reach hidden motive and the killer.	Murderer appears momentarily just twice before pay-off—which ain't cricket—but background and build-up are good.	Gets by

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The New Books

(*Continued from page* 25)

find that he has put himself and her completely in his father's power. What follows makes one of the most careful and absorbing plots to be found among recent novels.

And it is by no means an empty plot. The book is of that high order of story-telling in which the action displays the characters, and the characters make possible the action. It is that rare thing, an absorbing story, intelligently told.

B. D.

LOUDER THAN WORDS. By Hugh MacMullan. Loring & Mussey. 1935. $2.

The spirit of an adolescent boy struggling against the possessive will of two warped old men is effectively probed in this strong if somewhat unreal novel. The father is a sensitive but tenacious esthete withdrawn into his books, the uncle a harsh, self-frustrated puritan indulging himself in his gardens. Both seek fulfilment and justification for their futile lives in the career of the boy. But the boy has a rebellious temperament and an adventurous imagination, and his combat with the forces of his environment is mortal. These are Dickens types brought up to date and psychoanalyzed.

D. P.

Miscellaneous

YE MADDE DESIGNER. By Low. The Studio Publications, Inc. 1935. $2.50.

David Low is the greatest English caricaturist since Max Beerbohm. This book of his, copiously illustrated with his own work, is a delight. The present reviewer prefers his pencil and crayon to his pen and ink, but he is equally trenchant in either medium. How intelligent his discussion of caricature in this book is may be intimated by the following remarks:

> The art of personal caricature at its highest point of penetration is apt to achieve such particularity that it becomes almost private. Who, one might ask, could appreciate a vivid and intimate portrait of old Smith who knew not old Smith? The qualities of insight and perception which it might involve would be truly appreciated only by his intimates. Even when simplified to the elimination of subtlety, personal caricature is, naturally enough, an art of much more limited interest to the masses of the public than the more general "every-picture-tells-a-story" art of cartooning, with which, to the mortification of caricaturists, it is so often confused.

Mr. Low tells us why poor caricature is poor and should be characterized with an initial "k." He relates many anecdotes, He attacks his subject from many points of view. Best of all are the drawings you will wish to scan again and again, in pen and ink, of A. A. Milne passing by and of J. M. Barrie being whimsical. In crayon there are Shaw, Chesterton, and Belloc; the superb Aldous Huxley; Gerald Du Maurier, Baldwin, and Lloyd George, J. M. Keynes, Arnold Bennett, and Montague Norman. At the end of the book Mr. Low explains keenly the essential difference between a caricaturist like Max Beerbohm and himself.

W. R. B.

BORZOI BOOKS

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AND QUIET FLOWS THE DON

Mikhail Sholokhov's
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or Virgin Soil Upturned

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—A. G. MacDonell, author of "*England, Their England.*"

404 *pages*, $2.50

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By ROBERT E. ADAMS

MOST books in support of Peace are created by authors who have approached their subject from the theoretical rather than from the practical and realistic point of view. Few books on the co-related subjects of War and Peace have been written by authors who have shed their blood on battlefields or have had an opportunity to view and analyze the causes of war from the vantage point of practical experience.

WAR and WAGES crystallizes in blunt, forceful language, the earnest viewpoint of a practical soldier—for three decades an officer of the U. S. Marine Corps—who has been frequently charged with the sad duty of leading untrained boys into battle to die—boys that he feels might have survived the stern ordeal of war—had they been properly instructed in the highly specialized work they were called upon to perform.

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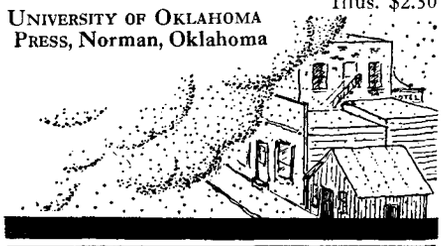
Deserts on the March

By PAUL B. SEARS Dust storms . . . drought . . . floods . . . these are the advance guard of deserts on the march to overwhelm America—as they have the garden spots of Persia, Egypt, Assyria—writes one of America's outstanding younger scientists. "An unusually thoughtful treatment of one of our basic problems."—*Henry A. Wallace.*

Illus. $2.50

UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA PRESS, Norman, Oklahoma



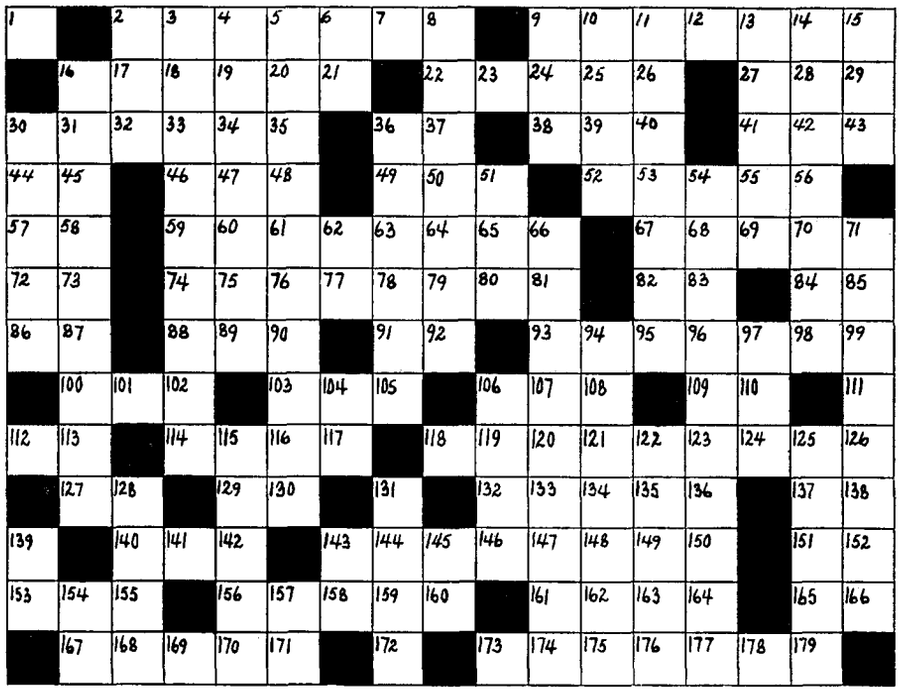
DON'T NEGLECT TO

Write Your Own Ticket

ON PAGE 21

Double-Crostics: No. 84

By ELIZABETH S. KINGSLEY



DIRECTIONS

To solve this puzzle, you must guess twenty-five words, the definitions of which are given in the column headed DEFINITIONS. The letters in each word to be guessed are numbered. These numbers appear under the dashes in the column headed WORDS. There is a dash for each letter in the required word. When you have guessed a word, fill it in on the dashes; then write each letter in the correspondingly numbered square on the puzzle diagram. When the squares are all filled in you will find (by reading from left to right) a quotation from a famous author. Reading up and down the letters mean nothing. The black squares indicate ends of words; therefore words do not necessarily end at the right side of the diagram.

When the column headed WORDS is filled in, the initial letters spell the name of the author and the title of the piece from which the quotation has been taken. Unless otherwise indicated, the author is English or American.

DEFINITIONS

I. Transitoriness.

II. Russian composer (1855-1914).

III. Tau cross used as sacred emblem (Egypt).

IV. Fragrant, aromatic.

V. First name of the heroine of "Felix Holt."

VI. Persons designated for office.

VII. The title of William Pitt.

VIII. Unnatural (var, sp.).

IX. Digression.

X. Expatiated, enlarged.

XI. Swiss mountaineer's singing.

XII. American novelist (1876-1916).

XIII. Wins one's way into favor.

XIV. Flighty, restless person.

XV. Famous English boys' school.

XVI. Bitter herbs.

XVII. Exempt.

XVIII. Russian novelist (1818-1883)

XIX. Character in "Henry IV."

XX. Book by Virginia Woolf.

XXI. Bore witness to.

XXII. Marched on.

XXIII. Mozart symphony in D Major.

XXIV. Goddess of Morn (Gr.).

XXV. The mountain ash.

WORDS

2 76 114 146 132 141 109 37

135 129 174 102 166 116

172 101 160 75

143 163 6 71 157 113 154 18

124 52 33 19 144 43

159 62 10 148 25 20 85 118

27 140 158 77 106 17 90

167 99 32 73

136 64 79 49 150 94 176 89 115 68

86 29 151 41 13 56 24 80 51

69 3 44 121 60 84 112 14 26

111 119 7 87 28 128

153 117 103 46 11 165 127 54 155 138 175

145 5 131 36 70 126 178 38 107 66 1

156 22 104 91

34 96 152 168

74 92 98 108 122 57 83 72

9 142 120 97 65 179

130 177 125 12 78 149 139 162

39 110 82 147 173 134 171

30 61 4 45 123

59 105 169 15 137 53 161 48

8 58 42 133 93 170 35

88 100 16 55 50 40 81

23 47 95

21 31 63 67 164

The solution of last week's *Double-Crostic* will be found on page 16 of this issue.

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The Compleat Collector

FINE PRINTING: CONDUCTED BY CARL PURINGTON ROLLINS

In alternate weeks this Department is devoted to Rare Books and is conducted by John T. Winterich

About Books and Printing

THE DOLPHIN, A JOURNAL OF THE MAKING OF BOOKS. Vol. II. New York: Limited Editions Club. 1935. $10.

THE first number of the *Dolphin* came out in 1933, and this is the second volume of the series (it can hardly be called an annual). Like its predecessor it has a wealth of matter in its pages, some of it being of considerable interest, while none is trivial. In general it is a little disappointing to find the tone of the contributions somewhat elementary; but they are written by competent people.

I believe that the most important and the most useful feature of the book is the illustrations, which have been provided on a lavish scale. Line engraving and photogravure processes have been used, and (especially in Mr. Hofer's article on Mr. Dwiggins) color has been freely introduced. Technical processes have been made clear by line drawings, while there are many reproductions of old pages, of liturgical typography, and of music printing. No more graphic record of current printing could be desired.

Three articles on type—"On Recognizing the Type Faces," a meticulous account of the differences in type designs, by Paul A. Bennett, and on the cutting and fitting of type by Mrs. Warde and Mr. Blumenthal, open the volume. Mr. Josephy, Mr. Sanford, and Mr. Warren Chappell write of the esthetics, the planning, and the development of the illustrated book. Mr. Fairbanks writes on Paper, Miss Diehl on Binding, and Mr. Adler sums up the whole matter by a detailed story of the making of the "Beowulf" volume.

In the second section of the *Dolphin* Mr. Wroth enlightens a minor subject—Printers' Manuals—Kathi Myer (in collaboration with Miss O'Meara) tells of the printing of music, while Mr. Updike contributes some notes on liturgical printing which are of great value.

The most impressive article in the whole volume is Mr. Hofer's account of the work of William A. Dwiggins, artist, philosopher, puppeteer. A brief biographical account is followed by a check list of Dwiggins's items, and then by twenty-four pages of reproductions of his work, printed in many colors. To those who know Dwiggins's particular style, the necessity for color in reproduction will be apparent, but it was generous of the publishers to provide it so liberally. There is also a sixteen-page insert, hand lettered by Dwiggins. Mr. Hofer's contribution will be invaluable to anyone seeking information about one of the least blatant but most attractive figures in contemporary art.

A survey of contemporary bookmaking in America and Europe and Japan, contributed by various writers, fills some seventy pages, with numerous reproductions of pages from recent books. An idea may be had from these pages of the current trends of printing in the various countries.

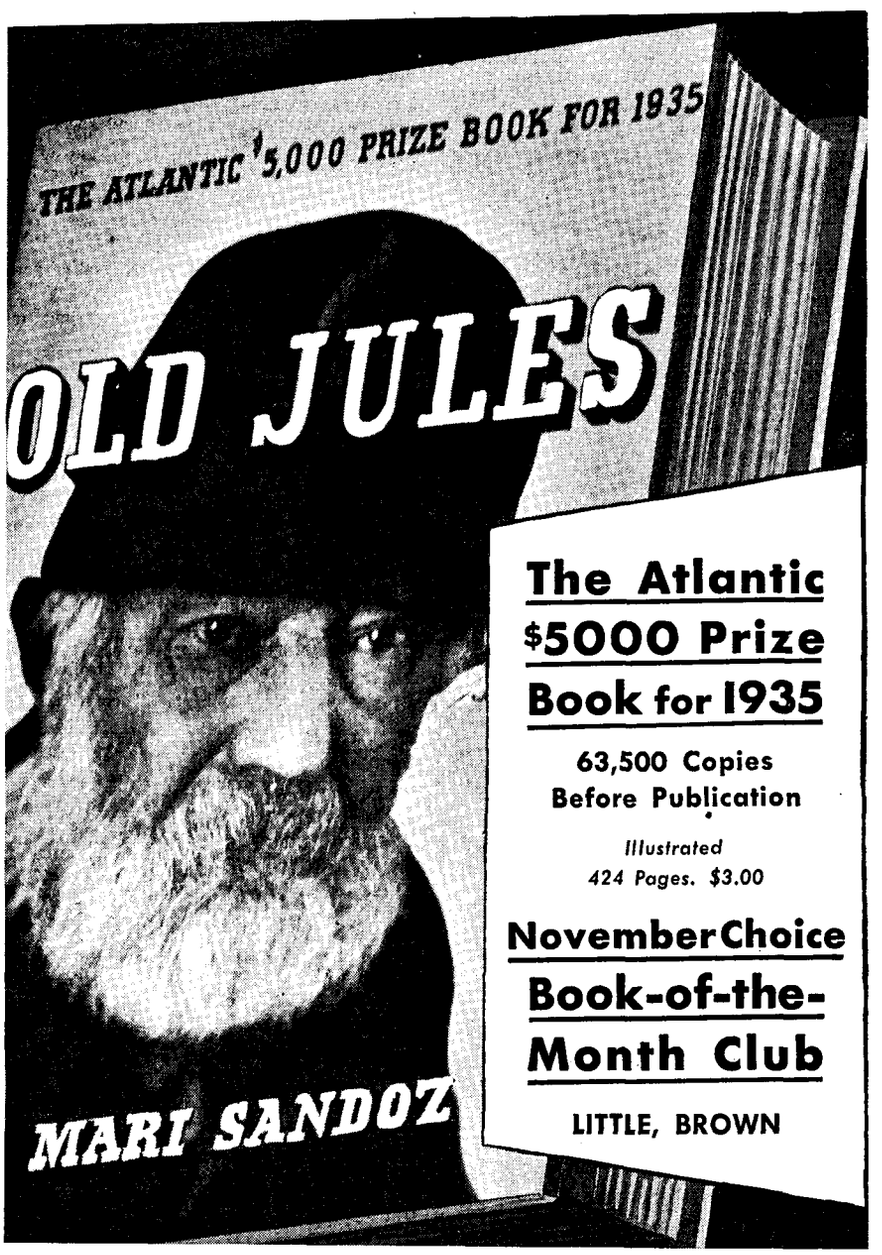
For several reasons I wish the *Dolphin* were a little less popular and a little more scholarly—but I recognize the cogency of the plan upon which Mr. Macy edits it for a class of readers who would not otherwise get the kind of information which it supplies. And for this purpose it is well adapted.

Notes

The Report of the Librarian of the John Carter Brown Library, in the usual modest but comely format which the Merrymount Press has given it for years, is at hand. Mr. Wroth states that the acquisitions during the year 1934-35 were of a "distinctiveness not invariably present" hitherto, due to the generous gifts of two friends of the Library, and to the purchases which the Library was able to make from the sale of the Ogden Goelet collection this year. A fortunate library!

PERSIAN BOOKBINDINGS OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY. (Univ. of Michigan Publications in the Fine Arts, Vol. I.) By Mehmet Aga-Oglu. Ann Arbor, 1935. $5.00.

As a contribution from the Research Seminary in Islamic Art at the University of Michigan comes this well-arranged volume profusely illustrated with off-set printed reproductions of Persian bindings. As might be supposed, the motifs of Persian decorative art lend themselves admirably to the traditional adornment of book covers. The pictures and accessory comment in this book are intended to supplement already published material with other specimens of artistic value.



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IMPOVERISHED POET would enjoy butter on his bread. Box 791-A.

MARY, with gray eyes and diverse interests, including music and medicine, thinks it might be fun to correspond with someone far away. Box 792-A.

POLYGLOTT — mentally-physically balanced, dynamic, interested all sports and socials, travelled afar, good character, personality and appearance, or so he's told, desires lively, congenial, stimulating companionship. Box 793-A.

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ROUND ABOUT Harrisburg is there a man, forty or more, having honor, humor, and culture interested in knowing a modern old-fashioned woman of like attributes? Eunice.

AUTHOR of highly praised novels and poems desperately needs help to continue career. (From their own knowledge the Editors of The Saturday Review can state that this is an especially meritorious appeal.) Box 800-A.

WANTED—Author to develop an economic theory. State qualifications and desire for work. Box 801-A.

YOUNG WOMAN, 28, traveled, degreed, personable, unacquainted in Philadelphia, finding it rather joyless, seeks escort occasional dancing, theatre, dinner. Strictly Dutch. Box 802-A.

GODDESS—Need you; urgent. "FRIDAY."

IS THERE A DANCE STUDIO in Murray Hill district to rent twice a week at 5:30? Box 805-A.

PERSONALS

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HOW DOES ONE RELIEVE the monotony of small town life? Possibly correspondence with interesting man of about thirty would do it. Box 804-A.

WHEN A YOUNG WOMAN NOVELIST from Colorado comes to New York and finds herself, of necessity, ringing door bells in Bloomfield, some one should save her illusions by offering a job. She will be secretary to a more successful author; write special articles or publicity; assist an editor. Has ideas, references, sense of humor. Box 806-A.

URGENT! Young man going to France, England will execute errands. Anything legitimate. Conscientious, dependable. References. Box 807-A.

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COLLEGE GRADUATE—Wharton—law—will assemble legal, financial, statistical material for busy writer. Box 809-A.

PART-TIME WORK WANTED. Mornings, afternoons, or evenings. Experienced author's secretary. College graduate, journalism major. Dictation to machine or in shorthand, typing, proof-reading, research. Box 810-A.

ROOMS for young gentlemen, with or without southern cooking. References. Top floor reconditioned brownstone house. East 56th St., near river. Roof in summer. WAtkins 9-3626.

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DON'T NEGLECT TO Write Your Own Ticket ON PAGE 21

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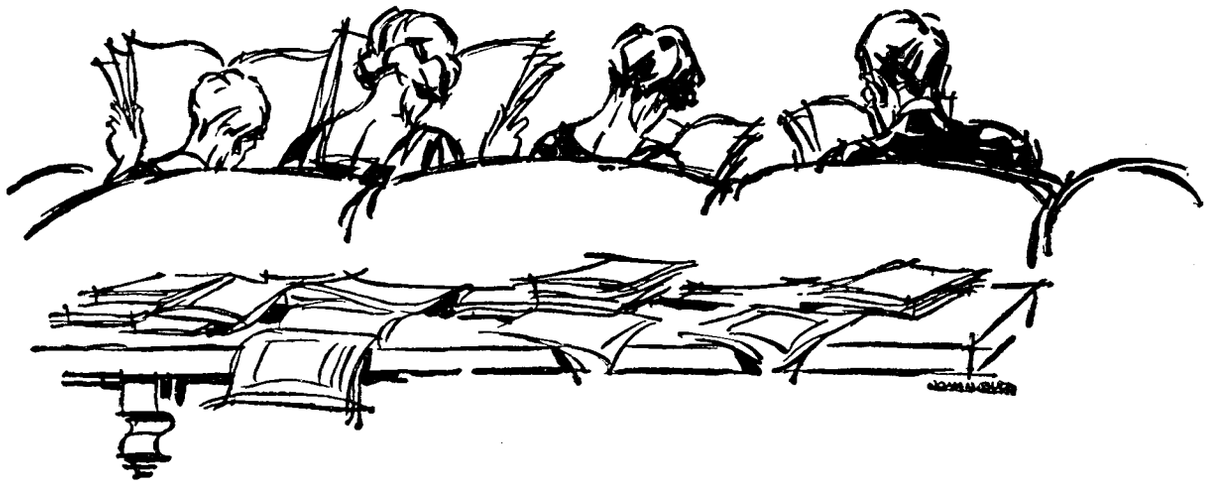

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